

27th session of the Human Rights Council (8-26 September 2014)

Panel discussion on protection of the family

Draft Statement by Ireland

Thank you Mr President,

Ireland shares the view of many in this room about the valuable contribution that families make to our societies, including in particular the crucial role that parents, care givers and families play in improving outcomes for children and young people, in caring for the disabled and the elderly, and in so many other ways. We also share the view that families should be supported by appropriate policies; and we strive to do so in our national context.

But we are equally strongly of the view that – in conformity with international human rights law – it is the members of the family to which human rights protections apply, rather than viewing the family unit itself as a rights-holder. This is a clear legal principle – but it also has important practical consequences, particularly in cases where a family member or members may be abused by others.

Furthermore, we consider that the family is a living, dynamic entity, and can take many forms. This is indeed one of its strengths. In our view this diversity is to be recognised and welcomed, just as we recognise and welcome the diversity of the larger units of communities and societies.

We would like to ask the panel to comment on how family-friendly policies can best be designed to reflect and respond to this diversity of family forms?

And how best can States ensure that family-friendly policies do not perpetuate gender stereotypes?

Thank you