



# IRELAND

Statement by

Mr. John Mulcahy, TD

Minister of State with responsibility for  
Equality, Disability Issues and Mental Health

to the

Fifty-fourth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

New York, 5 March 2010

*Check against Delivery*

PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
885 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017 TELEPHONE 212 421-6534 FAX 212 752-4726  
ireland@un.int

Chairperson

I am pleased to associate myself with the Statement made by Spain on behalf of the European Union.

I am happy to tell you that gender equality has advanced significantly in Ireland since we gathered in Beijing to complete our excellent blueprint - the Platform for Action.

Our sustained period of economic growth has resulted in a marked increase of 400,000 or so jobs. To date, the economic downturn in Ireland has affected male unemployment more than female unemployment. In many instances, women's income has held up better than income levels of the large number of families where the male partner is receiving unemployment benefit.

The introduction of a national minimum wage, maternity leave and increased child benefit have enabled women to meet their work and family commitments and have led to a decrease in the gender pay gap in Ireland which is now below the EU average.

I am pleased to report that women have also been highly visible in senior managerial and financial roles primarily to be found in politics.

Later this year, we will undertake a three year evaluation of five comprehensive, ten year National Women's Strategy published in 2007. This is timely, given the changed economic circumstances, in Ireland and across the globe. We will review progress on all the actions in the Strategy which to date address economic opportunity, women's well being and equal and active citizenship for women. We will also use the review process to determine how best to address the needs of specific groups such as migrant women, many of whom have moved to Ireland in the last decade.

Mr. Chair

Since Ireland last made a Statement to the CSW in 2008, we have also strengthened our legislation and adopted a comprehensive action plan to address human trafficking. Next week, we are publishing a new comprehensive strategy that addresses the heinous crime of gender based violence. The five year strategy aims to reduce prevalence and to ensure that the system of prevention and response functions effectively in a co-ordinated manner, increasing the understanding, awareness, and support for victims and ensuring the accountability of offenders.

Colleagues may already be aware that my portfolio includes the Irish Aid programme in Ireland's overseas development programme - Irish Aid. Over the past 15 years, Irish Aid has focused on strengthening gender mainstreaming across its work. We are to have a sustained impact on gender equality, and on poverty, through our commitment to a gender part rather than an add-on.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental human rights and essential to ensure effective and sustainable development efforts. Where women are empowered, there is more gender equality, there is less inequality, there is greater economic growth. Women have been shown to invest their earnings in developing their families and their communities.

The core priority of Ireland's aid programme is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, with a strong focus on the poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Women suffer disproportionately from poverty and food insecurity. Ireland is taking a strong lead internationally on the hunger crisis, highlighting the importance of the first MDG, which aims to halve poverty and hunger. The Irish Government recognises the importance of women's role in economic growth and addresses the needs of women in policy and programmes.

Some of Irish Aid's programme countries experience the highest levels of maternal mortality in the world. Irish Aid is working with partner governments to strengthen health systems, build capacity and integrate reproductive health into primary health care strategies.

The UN recently made significant progress towards the achievement of the goal of gender equality, with the Resolution on the establishment of a 'Composite Gender Entity'. Ireland fully supports this progress in strengthening the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the UN's work in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Implementation of Resolution 1225 is a challenge for Ireland. We have adopted an innovative approach to the development of our National Action Plan, working with participants from Ireland, Liberia and the UK and drawing upon the rich experience of those directly affected. We will continue to work with the Secretary-General and Security to chair the initiative and expect to present the comprehensive plan to the United Nations later this year.

Mr. Chair, Colleagues

We, in Ireland, continue to make a strong commitment to the achievement of gender equality, both at home and abroad. We appreciate and commend the ongoing work of the UN and its organisations in supporting all aspects of women's lives, as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. We pledge our continuing support.

Thank you.