



# IRELAND

**Statement By**

**Mr Sean Power TD**

**Minister of State at the**

**Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**

**with**

**Special Responsibility for Equality Issues**

**Fifty Second Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

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*Check against Delivery*

Chairperson

Firstly, I should like to congratulate you and your Bureau colleagues and, through you, the Secretariat, for the preparatory work which has led to the smooth running of this the fifty-second session of the CSW.

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

I am delighted to report very significant developments in Ireland in relation to both gender equality, and overseas aid focusing on gender issues, over the past twelve months.

In accordance with the commitment made in the context of Beijing, and to our social partnership agreements, the Irish Government published its National Women's Strategy 2000-2016 in April 2007. This is a cross-Departmental and widely-based Strategy, containing over 20 objectives and more than 200 actions, under three key themes of

- equalising socio-economic opportunity;
- ensuring the well-being of women; and
- engaging women as equal and active citizens.

A cross-sectoral High Level Committee will monitor progress in implementing the Strategy.

To support the Strategy, and to foster gender equality, my Government has increased the funding for positive actions to support women by over 21 per cent for 2008, to reach €10 million. Our statutory equality machinery will also receive funding of €8.1 million in 2008. Finally, the Irish Government is making over €600,000 available in 2008 to the National Women's Council of Ireland, which works to support and advocate on behalf of the 2.2 million women in Ireland.

A further key national development relates to violence against women. In 2007, the Irish Government established Cosc – a new National Office to provide leadership, and a cross-Departmental approach, to the prevention of the serious crimes of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, to the protection of victims and to the provision of services to those affected by this awful crime. Cosc is working in partnership with all stakeholders towards the development of a National Strategic Action Plan on Violence against Women.

The past year has also seen Ireland take new steps to tackle the issue of trafficking, of which women are most frequently the victims. New legislation is currently being discussed in our Parliament and, when enacted, it will bring Ireland into line with our commitments under the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN Protocol to Prevent Trafficking.

We have also established a new Executive Office within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to ensure that my country's response to trafficking in human beings is coordinated, comprehensive and holistic. A key task will be the development of a National Action Plan to Prevent and Tackle Trafficking in Human Beings which will assist us in curbing human trafficking and ensure that victims are helped and treated accordingly.

Irish Aid, our development aid structure, fully recognises that the achievement of gender equality is an essential component of sustainable human development. This is reflected in

our 'Gender Equality Policy' published by Irish Aid in 2004. The "White Paper on Irish Aid" published in 2006, further affirms Ireland's commitment to

- the fundamental human right of equality which is essential to effective poverty reduction; and
- the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security.

The Government has allocated a record €914 million for Official Development Assistance (ODA) this year, ensuring that Ireland remains firmly on course to reach the UN aid target of spending 0.7 per cent of GNP by 2012, ahead of schedule. I am happy to give you, in my circulated Statement, a small flavour of some key Irish development initiatives which have a gender focus.

We have endeavoured to raise the profile of gender based violence as a distinct and important issue. In this context we particularly welcome the Secretary General's initiative. Irish Aid spending, on interventions focusing on Gender Based Violence has increased very substantially, from €110,000 in 2005 to over €2.6 million in 2007, some 3.8 million dollars.

In light of its important mandate, the Government of Ireland has increased core funding to UNFPA in the last five years, from €1.8m in 2003 to €4.5m in 2007. This latter amount equates with over six and a half million dollars. Additionally, in 2007, the Government made a contribution of €1 million or nearly one and a half million dollars to the UNFPA Trust Fund for Global Reproductive Health Commodities Security, which aims to ensure that Governments have a constant supply of reproductive health products, including contraceptives, and basic supplies for obstetric care.

UNFPA was the natural home for a new UN trust fund, aiming to harness the donor commitment to maternal health. I am proud to say that Ireland was among the first countries to contribute to the "*No Woman Should Die Giving Life*" campaign, launched in December 2007. My country has made a contribution of €2 million, or almost 3 million US dollars, for the fund, which will work with governments, to increase capacities in three specific areas which reduce maternal mortality: family planning, skilled attendance at birth, and emergency obstetric care.

In early 2008, my Government also contributed to two other UNFPA trust funds, making available €500,000, or over 700,000 US Dollars to support UNFPA's work in obstetric fistula and a similar amount to support work on Female Genital Mutilation through the UNFPA/UNICEF trust fund working in 17 countries to end this unacceptable practice.

I am proud to be able to advise you today of these key achievements and a small flavour of the support we offer to target gender equality and the empowerment of women, both in my own country and abroad.

I commend the ongoing work of the UN and its organisations to support all aspects of women's lives and can pledge you continuing support from Ireland.

Thank you.