

MALTA



Statement by H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg, Ambassador Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations

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

Agenda Item 3 : Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Monday, 28th February 2011

United Nations, New York

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation would like to extend its appreciation to the UNSG for his report (E/CN.6/2011/3) on the priority theme. Malta welcomes the Report's Recommendations particularly since these Recommendations are also Malta's commitments in the enhancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. While we recognize the great challenges in the implementation of our commitments, Malta intends to work with vigour and determination with the other UN Member States to surmount these challenges with the aim of ensuring that the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action are achieved.

Safeguarding equal treatment between men and women in all spheres is fundamental to ensure equality of opportunities. In pursuance of this objective, the Maltese Government continues to take different measures to integrate the gender perspective into national development strategies.

Equality of opportunity in access and participation of both genders in education and training, as well as in the labour market are fundamental for the achievement of *de facto* equality in society at large. Indeed, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality in Malta deems that the contribution of both genders in the labour market and in the sphere of education is crucial not only to boost economic development but also to enhance social inclusion.

To this end, the integration of the gender dimension in all policies, programmes and measures contributes to the promotion of gender equality in both social and economic spheres.

Mr. Chairman,

At this point, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to clarify Malta's position on the statement made last week in this Commission on behalf of the EU Member States by H.E. The Minister for National Resources of the Republic of Hungary.

Malta would like to register its position once again in its consistent reiteration that it is unable to endorse or accept language to the effect that "*gender equality cannot be achieved without guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights and..... that expanding access*

to sexual and reproductive health information and health services are essential for achieving the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme for Action, and the Millennium Development Goals”.

As it did in numerous international conferences including the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing sixteen years ago, Malta would like to reaffirm the view that any discussion of rights and services in connection with reproductive health cannot take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life. Furthermore, these discussions are to be taken in the context of the ICPD.

Moreover, Malta maintains its position that this year's theme under consideration this session of the Commission on the Status of Women does not provide the proper context for such language.

In Malta, the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) which is the legal framework in which the local education system operates specifies the importance of equality of access to the educational system. Such equality of access has to be without discrimination “on the grounds of ability, gender, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background. In fact, the issue of Gender Equality is considered in detail under Principle 11 of the NMC, which states that “gender equality is not a theme that should be treated by the school in isolation, or during the teaching of a particular subject. Equality should be an interdisciplinary theme which teachers can develop within the context of their particular subject, confronting prejudice and promoting more gender inclusive alternatives”. Moreover, Objective 5 of the Curriculum, outlines the strengthening of gender equality in schools. This objective is also expressed in Part 1 (3) of the Education Act which refers on the right of education without discrimination based on “age, sex, belief or economic means”. Therefore, gender is taken into account in curriculum development and teaching approaches and is also included as a topic in subjects such as Social Studies (Secondary level); Personal and Social Development (both Primary and Secondary level); and Home Economics (Secondary level).

The NMC also provides clear directives regarding the school-to-work curriculum and encourages gender-equal guidance and equity in opportunities and outcomes. In this context, Guidance Teachers have been provided with a Gender Services Manual which in turn provides the framework regarding the role, competences and quality standards regarding gender issues. Also, gender equity is a core issue in teacher formation within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta where students are engaged in a process of creating awareness on the intersection of gender. For instance, one of the courses is Gender Equity in the Primary School which explores the complex issues surrounding one of the social markers of difference in our schools and society. Students consider the primary school's pedagogy outcomes for girls and boys, and whether a gender equity policy would reduce or eliminate the negative outcomes for children.

Furthermore, gender is available as a topic in continuing professional development activities provided by education authorities. Compulsory in-service courses are organised for teachers by the Curriculum and eLearning Department within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to once again extend our congratulations to the UNSG, the USG and Executive Director of UN Women Ms. Michelle Bachelet as well as other key actors, who made UN Women a reality. The Official Launch of UN-Women, which took place last week (24 February 2011) clearly indicates that this much needed new entity will contribute to strengthening the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the UN System in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Thank you.