

MALTA



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Christopher Grima, Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations**

Fifty-sixth 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”**

Friday, 2nd March 2012

United Nations, New York

Mme. Chair,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election to preside over this year's Session of the Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

Malta associates itself with the statement of the European Union delivered by H.E. Mr. Manu Sareen, Minister for Gender Equality of Denmark. I would like however to add some elements from our national perspective.

The Government of Malta recognizes the difficulties that are constantly faced by women in rural areas, which could range from malnutrition and the lack of food security, to the difficulty of access to proper health care and other services. As a result, rural women are more susceptible to end up living a life of poverty, thus slowing progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mme. Chair,

Malta acknowledges that providing equal opportunities to all men and women, including those in rural settings contributes to alleviating their status by safeguarding and promoting gender equality in society at large. In this regard, Malta is committed to combating discriminatory treatment in order to empower and enhance the participation of women in the economic and social spheres. Malta endorses gender mainstreaming and the promotion and integration of gender equality in all policies and measures as a means to address different circumstances and needs of men and women in various settings.

Indeed, through the efforts of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, Malta is working with relevant stakeholders to produce tools for safeguarding and promoting gender equality by providing training, highlighting good practices and encouraging the replication of such good practices to enhance the implementation of this principle.

Various initiatives have been undertaken in Malta to assist women and encourage their participation in areas where they are underrepresented. Encouraging more women to participate in employment, which contributes to enhancing their economic independence, reduces their risk of poverty and social exclusion.

An example of such an initiative by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality is by raising awareness on gender equality in employment through the 'Equality Mark' certification that is given to employers who foster equal opportunities in their business cases, following an equality review. Through this 'Equality Mark' employers are encouraged to factually promote equal treatment and equal opportunities to both genders, mainly in the recruitment process; in the working conditions including pay; in the development and update of an equality and a sexual harassment policy; in training and career progression; and in the uptake of family friendly measures.

Mme. Chair,

Malta's national action plan for combating poverty and social exclusion focuses on promoting three broad priority objectives, namely the social inclusion prospects of children and young people (such as through better and more inclusive education), active inclusion (such as through better employment prospects and opportunities for all) and equal opportunities (through increased attention to the most marginalized and vulnerable population groups).

Malta will remain committed to the efforts to mainstream gender equality in all policies and measures, as well as raising awareness on equal rights and responsibilities in order to further promote gender equality and the advancement of women in Maltese society.

Mme Chair,

The Government of Malta will continue to dedicate its energy and policies to guarantee the accessibility, quality and sustainability of these services and resources, particularly public health services.

The Maltese public health care system provides a comprehensive basket of health services to all persons residing in Malta who are covered by the Maltese social security legislation, but also provides necessary care to special groups.

The Health Division offers comprehensive obstetric services ranging from antenatal care through delivery to the postpartum period. In such procedures and others relating to the sexual and reproductive health of women Malta upholds a principled position that these do not take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life. Malta strongly believes that the right to life extends to the unborn child from the moment of conception, and therefore considers that the use of abortion as a means of resolving health or social problems is a denial of that right.

Bearing in mind this principled position Malta continues to work hard to implement the commitments and objectives as set out in the Cairo and Beijing Platforms of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other relevant international instruments.

Mme. Chair,

To conclude allow me to underscore the determination of my Government to empower women by inter alia safeguarding their rights on equality, and by combating and preventing discriminatory treatment in order to be able to ensure the realisation of their full potential to participate in all spheres of Maltese society.