



# **The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations**

**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Gunnar Pálsson  
Permanent Representative**

**GA65 / Item 28 - Advancement of Women  
3<sup>rd</sup> Committee**

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This year marks in many ways a milestone in the long march towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

In my own country, we celebrate that ninety five years have gone by since women gained the right to vote and recall that Iceland was the first democracy to elect a woman president thirty years ago. Today, our government is headed by our first female prime minister. Iceland's strong record on women's participation and representation in the political process has contributed to our remaining a leader in gender-equality, as witnessed by the World Economic Forum's most recent Global Gender Gap Report.

Also, on the day of the United Nations, 24<sup>th</sup> October this year, it will be 35 years since women gathered for one of the largest rallies ever held in Iceland to draw attention to women's rights. This event, combined with an even larger event five years ago, firmly put gender issues on the political agenda. This year women will take to the streets once again, this time focusing on the fight against gender based violence.

But we can also take satisfaction in the progress we have made in the United Nations. This year's long awaited, unanimous decision to create a new and consolidated gender entity, UN Women, is a major accomplishment. Iceland has in the past been a devoted supporter of UNIFEM and remains committed to continuing its support through UN Women, led by the new Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Michelle Bachelet.

We furthermore look forward to celebrating later this month the tenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The appointment of the Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, marked an auspicious beginning to the anniversary year. My government is confident that her appointment, along with the increased efforts of the International Criminal Court and other institutions, will help prevent and put an end to impunity for crimes of the kind we have witnessed earlier this year in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

These crimes and other reports of the lamentable conditions of women in many parts of the world remind us of the long distance still to be traversed with regard to women's issues. As to the gender-related Millennium Development Goals, progress on all of which has been lagging, UN Women should have a leading role. Every year, over 500 thousand women die during childbirth. Major imbalances remain between men and women in the area of education. In all countries, the gender wage gap must be remedied, along with underemployment and lack of access to the formal labour market in developing countries. In far too

many countries, women are excluded or unable to participate in the political process.

Little can be achieved without cooperation at all levels, where the United Nations agencies could render useful service in engaging governments and civil society. Gradually, more data is becoming available for tracking and reporting on progress, gaps and opportunities for men and women. However, we must also look beyond mere aggregate numbers and make sure that vulnerable and marginalized groups are taken account of as we try to reach our goals.

Returning to UNSC resolution 1325, the importance of this resolution and its subsequent resolutions cannot be over emphasized. In Iceland, particular focus has been on those aspects of the resolution calling for women's participation in peace negotiations. A Gender Equality Training Programme has been set up at the University of Iceland. The objective of the programme, with students participating from Afghanistan and Palestine, is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries, as well as countries affected by conflict. We would like the programme to be recognized one day as a United Nations University Programme. Also, the Icelandic government is now preparing to update the national action plan by incorporating the new set of United Nations indicators. We hope that the set of indicators will be adopted by the Security Council later this month and remain confident that they will enable us to keep better track of the resolution's implementation.

Earlier this year Iceland ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Trafficking in persons is a lucrative criminal activity in many countries and has far-reaching implications, fuelling both violence and human rights violations. The ratification of the Protocol should assist victims of trafficking in reaching out for help.

Iceland is pleased that the advancement of women has finally risen to prominence in our deliberations within the United Nations. We must seize on this momentum to make good on our commitments as a whole generation in the world's poorest countries grows up without access to food, health care and education. Keeping in mind that women's advancement is not a separate problem, but an integral part of the solution, let us draw inspiration from what we have achieved in 2010 and act without delay.