

Human Rights Council - 26th session
(10th June – 27th June 2014)

**Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination
against women in law and in practice and the Special Rapporteur on the right to
education**

16 June 2014

Statement by Ireland

Thank you Mr. President.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

We welcome both the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, and thank them for their Reports and presentations today.

Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice

Ireland welcomes the Report of the Working Group which deals with a variety of issues in relation to discrimination against women in economic and social life, providing recommendations on the girl child, adulthood, older women, and violence against women. We note, in particular, the Working Group's recommendation to eliminate all discriminatory laws and practices which prevent girls from completing their education, including child marriage. The elimination of such barriers is key to ensuring the right of girls to education and to building a future free of discrimination.

Although major challenges remain concerning discrimination against women in economic and social life, Ireland notes the Report's reference to positive achievements such as significant progress in reducing the gender gap in education. We also welcome recognition of the role of civil society, for instance in relation to corporate and social responsibility or the formation of the Business and Human Rights Reference Group working to elaborate on how gender fits into the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The Report contains a section on discrimination against women in relation to the post-2015 development agenda. We agree that "empowering women means a more efficient use of a nation's human capital endowment and that reducing gender inequality enhances productivity and economic growth". It is clear that the empowerment of women benefits society as a whole. We support calls in the agreed conclusions of the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to reflect gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls "as a stand-alone goal... to be integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of any new development framework" in the post-2015 development agenda. The Report of the Working Group deals specifically with macroeconomic policy, economic crisis, and austerity measures, in relation to the development agenda. *Beyond these particular issues, could the Working Group elaborate on how the discrimination against women should be considered in the post-2015 development agenda?*

We also note that while the Report has a broad scope in dealing with several issues concerning discrimination against women in economic and social life, it does not refer to the role of the media. The media has enormous capacity to contribute positively to the achievement of gender equality at all levels. This is recognised in the Beijing Platform which lays down two strategic objectives to:

(J.1) increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; and (J.2) promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Does the Working Group agree that the media has a role to play in promoting gender equality and how can this role be developed?

Special Rapporteur on the right to education

I turn now to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education concerning assessment of the educational attainments of students and the implementation of the right to education. Ireland welcomes the emphasis placed on ensuring that national assessment systems comply with international human rights norms and on taking a holistic approach to education, in line with the objectives of relevant international human rights conventions. We also agree with the Report's encouragement for those systems to embody the spirit of human values and human dignity. Ireland recognises the importance of the role of teachers and of ensuring that they have sufficient capacity to carry out their functions. Ireland particularly supports the Special Rapporteur's call for Governments to encourage involvement from NGOs and civil society in constructive dialogue regarding a holistic approach to student assessments.

In the Report, the Special Rapporteur presents recommendations concerning civil society organisations and NGOs, including one calling on States to continue to champion the cause of quality education in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. *How should education be considered in the context of the post-2015 development agenda in order to ensure a human rights-based approach? What role, if any, do civil society organisations and NGOs have to play in this process, or in other areas related to the content of the Report?*

Ireland reiterates its support to both Special Rapporteurs for their ongoing work and looks forward to future engagement with them.

Thank you Mr. President.