

Third Committee (Agenda item 28 – “Advancement of Women”)

**65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
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Statement by

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Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Malta to the United Nations**

Mr. Chairman,

On Monday the Ambassador of Belgium delivered a Statement on behalf of the EU Member States. The EU statement generally reflects Malta’s position on the advancement of women. However, my delegation would like to make a few additional remarks and to register its position, with respect to the language pertaining to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Malta strongly reaffirms its strong support and commitment to the full implementation of the 1994 ICPD, the Beijing Platform for Action and the subsequent international instruments, as well as the MDGs. At the same time, my delegation is not in a position to share the view that these commitments cannot be achieved without guaranteeing women’s sexual and reproductive health, rights and services.

In this regard, Malta does not consider or perceive terms or recommendations that imply or impinge practices resulting in abortion to be used in Malta. The national legislation of Malta considers the termination of pregnancy through procedures of induced abortion as illegal, and does not recognise it as a measure of family planning. Malta reiterates the view that any discussion of rights and services in connection with women empowerment and reproductive health cannot take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life.

Malta also firmly continues to maintain that any position taken or recommendations made regarding women empowerment and gender equality in relation to sexual reproductive health and rights, will be considered in the context of the reservations made at the time of the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), and in subsequent meetings including, the Beijing Platform of Action (1994) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Government of Malta is fully committed to the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality among both sexes. Indeed, the Maltese Government has taken different measures to integrate the gender perspective into national development strategies. The promotion of equality between women and men is present both in law and in practice in Malta. In fact, gender mainstreaming is a horizontal priority for the Maltese Government. Accordingly, this has been strengthened within the national agenda to ensure equality of opportunity in the design, application, analysis and monitoring of all laws, policies and programmes.

By promoting active inclusion and enhancing equality of opportunities, Malta is enhancing the advancement of women by empowering women to participate in the labour market and in the social spheres; by addressing the situations of persons who are at risk of poverty; by assisting women and men suffering from violence; by making work pay; by promoting greater availability of

adequate and affordable housing; and by combating the intergenerational transmission of poverty and social exclusion.

Malta welcomes and is encouraged by the active role the United Nations is playing on women's affairs. We commend the ongoing collaboration and consultations by the UNSG with the Member States.

Following the Special Commemorative Meeting of the 15th Anniversary of the ICPD last year, ECOSOC, the CSW and the CPD dedicated the major part of their deliberations this year to important issues relating to the advancement of women. Indeed, the Annual Ministerial Review of the substantive session of the ECOSOC focused its attention and its Ministerial Declaration on the implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. Malta welcomes this Ministerial Declaration.

To crown these efforts, two weeks ago, our Heads of States and Government and Ministers participating in the High-level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs, endorsed the document "Keeping the promise", which confirmed that this promise cannot be kept without fulfilling MDG3.

It has been described as a "historic move" by the UN General Assembly when on 2 July 2010, the UN Member States unanimously decided to create a new entity to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide. In this context, Malta welcomes the establishment of UN-Women which we believe will contribute to strengthen the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the UN System in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In this regard, Malta would like to extend its felicitations to Ms. Michelle Bachelet for her appointment as the new Under-Secretary-General of the UN-Women, and to Ms. Margot Wallstrom, for her appointment as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence, for the assumption of this new role. Malta would also like to assure them of its cooperation and support in their tasks ahead.

Thank You.