

**Ireland's review before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
Against Women**

15 February 2016

Introduction by Ambassador O'Brien

Thank you Madam Chair.

It is an honour for me to address you on the occasion of the consideration of Ireland's reports before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Ireland's interaction with this Committee, as with the other United Nations treaty bodies, is of great importance to us.

To begin, I am sorry to convey that our Tánaiste – our Deputy Prime Minister – could not be with us today. I am sorry because I **know**, both professionally and personally, how committed our Tánaiste is in supporting, promoting and progressing human rights issues, especially with regard to women.

Ireland has always had a strong policy of support for the UN and the promotion and protection of human rights, as evidenced by our engagement here in Geneva and in New York. We are proud of our own domestic record of protecting and promoting human rights and of our contribution to advancing human rights at the international level, including during our recent membership of the Human Rights Council. We are at the same time very committed to ongoing improvement in the protection and promotion of human rights and to engagement and dialogue with civil society stakeholders in this regard.

While our Human Rights Council membership concluded in 2015, we continue to lead on two initiatives that are very important to us. In an era of increasing threats to the space for civil society, Ireland has brought forward three

important resolutions which recognise the impact and importance of civil society and set out clearly and for the first time many of the key actions required of States to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society actors. Our work on this issue is motivated not only by an awareness of the challenges and increasing dangers faced by civil society activists in many parts of the world; but also by a recognition of the value to States of a vibrant civil society.

We brought our second initiative on the preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5 most recently at the last Council session in September 2016. We were delighted that the Council adopted by consensus the resolution which acknowledges the role played by women's and girls' education and empowerment when addressing the underlying causes of child mortality and morbidity.

Looking beyond the Human Rights Council, Ireland is a strong advocate of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Our second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, launched in 2015, also demonstrates in a very concrete way Ireland's commitment to addressing the global challenges faced by women. This second Plan has an increased focus on the empowerment and participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building. It draws on Ireland's own experience in peace keeping, overseas development aid and contributions to post-conflict reconciliation on the island of Ireland.

The UN Treaty Bodies are undeniably great defenders of the international human rights protection system. Indeed, they stand at the heart of human rights protection. All parties benefit from the work of Treaty Bodies. The involvement of civil society groups and government representatives in reporting and other processes generates a genuine dialogue at the national level that improves our

laws, policies, and institutions. We are particularly fortunate in Ireland to have a strong and vibrant civil society, whose contribution to dialogues like this is critically important. We are delighted that so many of our civil society organisations contributed to the process before this Committee and are here today.

I am honoured now to pass you to Dr Carol Baxter, Assistant Secretary at the Department of Justice and Equality, who will now make an opening statement updating you on developments since Ireland made its response to the Committee's list of issues.

Thank you.