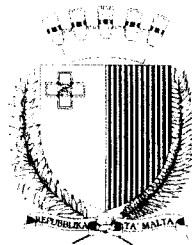


MALTA



Statement by

H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Malta

to the United Nations

at the

**UNGA 64, Third Committee, Statement on Advancement of Women
(Agenda item 62) "Advancement of Women"**

Monday, 12 October 2009

United Nations, New York

(Please check against delivery)

PERMANENT MISSION OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
249 EAST 35TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 TEL. (212) 725-2345 FAX. (212) 779-7097
e-mail: malta-un.newyork@gov.mt

Mr. Chairman,

Before presenting Malta's views on the item under consideration, my Delegation would like to refer to the statement delivered by the Sweden on behalf of the EU Member States. While the statement generally reflects Malta's position on the advancement of women, my delegation would like to once again clarify its position with respect to the language pertaining to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Malta strongly reaffirms its position on the terms 'Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights', 'Reproductive Rights', and 'Reproductive Health Services'. In no way does Malta consider or perceive these terms as signifying abortion or the imposing of this practice on Malta and its Constitution. The national legislation of Malta considers the termination of pregnancy through procedures of induced abortion as illegal, and does not recognise abortion as a measure of family planning. Malta has consistently expressed its reservation on the use of terms such as 'reproductive rights', 'reproductive services' and 'control of fertility', including in the context of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Beijing Platform of Action (1994) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Whilst expressing its support for these Programmes and Instruments, Malta reiterates and upholds its reservations made at the time of their adoption.

In this regard, Malta 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, should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health rights, services or commodities. We request that this position be put on the records of this meeting and be taken into account when preparing similar reports in the future.

Mr. Chairman,

Malta is relentlessly committed to the advancement of women in all social and economic spheres of society. 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.

Malta seeks to enhance the development of both women and men by promoting active inclusion and enhancing equality of opportunities into its society. Malta promotes the advancement of women by empowering women to participate in the labour market and in the social spheres; addressing the situations of persons who are at risk of poverty; assisting women and men suffering from violence; making work pay; promoting greater availability of adequate and affordable housing; and combating the intergenerational transmission of poverty and social exclusion.

The Constitution of Malta guarantees the equality of women and men in the enjoyment of all economic, cultural, civil and political rights. In addition, a number of laws have been enacted to protect the rights of women and give support to articles in CEDAW, including the Employment and Industrial Relations Act of 2002 and the Equality for Men and Women Act of 2003. Family legislation had been amended to grant to both spouses equal rights and responsibilities in marriage, including joint responsibility for children and the right to jointly administer property acquired during the marriage.

National machinery for the advancement of women has been put into place to ensure that women and men play an equal and active role in society, by raising public awareness on gender equality, and collaborate and consult with various bodies including trade unions and women's NGOs. It is also responsible for developing and monitoring policies related to gender equality, proposing measures for the elimination of discrimination against women, conducting general investigations, investigating individual complaints, and providing assistance to persons to enforce their right to gender equality.

Mr. Chairman,

In the context of the present challenging international economic conditions, and taking into account the specific domestic situation, in its Budget for 2009, the Maltese Government adopted a number of gender inclusive measures which aim to stimulate economic activity whilst at the same time addressing the challenges facing the Maltese economy.

In such a context, the Maltese Government is committed towards the emerging needs of families, employees and businesses. Accordingly, the Maltese Government safeguards the advancement of women by:

- Providing fiscal incentives to female employees and inactive women to encourage their participation in the labour market. These fiscal incentives are available to: mothers who return to the labour market after a five-year absence; and mothers already in employment or who have not been absent for five years, and who return to work after childbirth;
- Providing child care services either within specifically designed facilities or within private homes through Government regulated standards, with the aim of enhancing women's social inclusion as employees and as full participants in society at large;
- Facilitating the reconciliation of work and private life, especially by enhancing flexible working arrangements and special leave provisions for public employees;
- Identifying and tackling discriminatory practices and policies in the provision of goods and services in the public administration;
- Encouraging the replication of good practices in relation to gender mainstreaming in the public administration;

The Maltese Government is also carrying out research activities in order to feed them into future policy and initiatives. The current in-depth research study taking place will seek to identify: the stumbling blocks that hinder women from participating in the labour market and from reaching decision-making positions; the impact of gender on entrepreneurship; wider knowledge of the situation of vulnerable workers, including women; and the life prospects of teenage parents. Furthermore, the National Commission for the promotion of Equality is developing the standards for an 'Equality Mark' that will be given to employers who foster equal opportunities in their business environment.

Mr. Chairman,

The advancement of women in Malta is not only encouraged through legislative and policy changes, but it is also complemented by various initiatives, enhanced monitoring of equality, and other good practices in the public administration to ensure non discrimination and safeguard equality of opportunities. Hence, the advancement of women is a fundamental priority for Malta. To this end, Malta welcomes the active collaboration and consultation with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women to further mainstream gender equality in society at large.

Thank you.

