



**Buan-Ionad na hÉireann
chun na Náisiún Aontaithe**
Permanent Mission of Ireland
to the United Nations

57th session of the Conference on Population and Development

National Statement

1 May 2024

Madam Chair, excellencies,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Commission on Population and Development today.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union

It is a real pleasure for me to deliver the first national statement by Ireland in almost a decade.

In the intervening period, I am pleased to report that in both our domestic and foreign policy, Ireland has made real progress in the fulfilment of the commitment made at ICPD 30 years ago to place human rights, and the rights of women and girls in particular, at the heart of the sustainable development agenda.

Ireland recognises that along with education and other essential services, full access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is fundamental for the transformation of health and well-being, for everyone. It is a driver for gender equality, and a precursor to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2015 we became the first country ever to legalise same-sex marriage through a popular vote, and, in 2018, through constitutional amendment, we removed severe restrictions on access to abortion. In 2022 we recorded a 73% reduction in the incidence of teen pregnancies resulting from well

targeted health and education policies delivered over a period of just two decades.

Research and evidence continues to be central to the design and delivery of policies and regulations relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights in Ireland.

Equally, that research and evidence informs our development cooperation policy.

In 2023, Ireland launched a new initiative on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights marking a renewed effort to secure gender equality and women's empowerment through our development cooperation.

The initiative consolidates our long-standing commitments to tackle all forms of sexual and gender based violence; to prevent and treat HIV; and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.

We are scaling up measures to meet the demand for safe modern contraception. We aim to help reduce unintended pregnancy and, by extension, to reduce the risk of unsafe abortion - a major contributor to maternal mortality. In keeping with Agenda 2030, Ireland will continue to prioritise the needs of the furthest behind in all its development cooperation and other engagements, including when it comes to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

While we recognise and acknowledge the great strides forward taken across the globe since 1994, such as the reduction of maternal mortality by one third and the closing of the gender gap in education, progress is stalling.

A variety of inter-linked drivers including climate change and conflict are contributing to a stagnation of progress on women's health in many low- and lower middle-income settings.

The loss of one woman's life every two minutes because she is unable to access the correct care during pregnancy or childbirth is not only a tragedy, it is a human rights infringement. We know from the deliberations in Cairo 30 years ago that just and sustainable growth and development, for any society, is not possible without the protection and promotion of human rights, including reproductive and sexual rights.

We are deeply concerned by attempts to undermine or erode our common commitment to human rights. The rights of women and girls must remain at the centre of sustainable development, and we were glad to see this commitment reaffirmed by all Member States through the Political Declaration earlier this week.

Fresh thinking, and renewed and accelerated effort is needed to address these persistent gaps in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights between now and 2030.

Over the course of this year, and in the years to come, Ireland will continue to support and advance the commitments framed 30 years ago in Cairo. We believe these commitments to be as relevant now, as they were in 1994.

Thank you

[628 words]