

Mr. Chair

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Commission on Population and Development. Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the European Union.

At the outset, Ireland wishes to express our appreciation to the UN, and UNFPA in particular, for the substantial effort and the participatory nature of the global review. We believe that the ICPD Global Review Report provides an extremely valuable evidence base for our discussions.

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action, it is clear from MDG reports and from the Global Review Report itself that much progress has been made.

However, the Report also highlights the "significant unfinished business" particularly when it comes to women's empowerment, access to reproductive health care, and maternal mortality.

In particular, the Global Review Report underlines conclusions from other fora that inequalities, both within and between countries, stubbornly persist. Those who have been left behind, in particular as a result of inequality and discrimination, must now be given our absolute priority.

In our view this requires a twin track approach – firstly, continued global interventions aimed at strengthening and implementing the commitments we have made to realise human rights and the MDGs. And secondly, specific interventions aimed at those most vulnerable to inequality and discrimination in the poorest countries.

Ireland's experience has been reflected in our Policy for International Development published last year. We are committed to stronger governance, the pursuit of human rights – including gender equality – and better accountability mainstreamed throughout all our work.

Hunger is a national priority for Ireland, and together with our partners, our priority under the Scaling Up Nutrition movement, is to address maternal, infant and child undernutrition, an issue which we are pleased to see reflected in the global report, which underscores the importance of good nutrition before, during and after pregnancy.

Ireland's policy contains an explicit commitment to the Cairo Programme of Action, through efforts that reduce maternal and infant mortality, promote universal access to reproductive healthcare - including ante-natal care - and family planning services which support safe motherhood while allowing women to control their fertility.

Mr. Chair

Ireland's assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action is informed by our domestic as well as international experience.

We believe that gender equality remains a universal challenge, with few countries able to claim that they have realised full political or economic empowerment for women. Likewise, violence against women including by intimate partners is a scourge that continues to plague most societies. In this context, we welcome the initiatives taken by governments and communities to tackle the abuse of human rights manifested by early and forced marriage, as well as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

We are convinced that ensuring quality secondary education for girls, and comprehensive sexuality education for all, are central to women's empowerment; to realising sexual and reproductive health rights; and to enhancing the lives of families everywhere.

Looking ahead we echo the concerns expressed by previous speakers about the need to act more urgently to address changing population dynamics - both our aging populations worldwide and in particular the needs of the largest demographic cohort of young people seeking to enter the workforce.

Climate change, migration, and urbanisation are also among the emerging challenges to which we must respond.

Mr. Chair

In conclusion allow me to reiterate Ireland's continued strong support to fully realising the objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. We look forward to working constructively with other member states to secure a positive outcome from September's Special Session and to ensuring that the outcome from our deliberations contributes to the strongest possible Post 2015 Development Agenda, particularly for the most vulnerable, including women and children.

Thank you.