

MALTA



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Christopher Grima, Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations**

Fifty-seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

**Agenda Item 3 : Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the
twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000:
gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

Monday 11th March 2013

United Nations, New York

Mme Chair,

Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by H E Ms Kathleen Lynch, Minister of State for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People of Ireland on behalf of the European Union and its Member States I would like however to add a few additional remarks from our national perspective

The Government of Malta upholds the commitment to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls while also promoting and sustaining the advancement and empowerment of women in its society

Malta has in recent years strengthened its stance with regard to the prevention and reduction of violence against women and girls, primarily through its work on Domestic Violence In effect, Domestic Violence is covered by the Domestic Violence Act and the Equality for Men and Women Act The Commission on Domestic Violence was setup through the Domestic Violence Act It advises on proposals for research, awareness raising initiatives and public education programs, identifies strategies to prevent violence, offering adequate services to both victims and perpetrators, and conducts training for professional groups

Malta’s National Action Plan on Domestic Violence is based on the Blueprint of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence, and consists of (a) Legal and Policy Measures, (b) Support and Protection for Victims, (c) Data Collection, and (d) Awareness Raising

In fact, on 21st May 2012, Malta also signed the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention Malta, through the Commission on Domestic Violence, participated actively in the drafting of this Convention, together with the other Council of Europe Member States Malta’s signature of this Convention signifies a milestone in Government’s zero tolerance approach to violence against women and domestic violence and its commitment to the eradication of domestic violence Malta is now working towards the ratification of this Convention

Mme Chair,

Malta believes that effective cooperation between different stakeholders is fundamental for the development of practices that provide holistic protection to victims of violence and the prosecution of perpetrators of such violence. An inter-Ministerial Committee on Crime and Violence Prevention has been set up for the purpose of Crime Prevention and coordinated multi-sectoral responses and services for women, girls and vulnerable groups subjected to violence.

A number of Emergency Shelters are also committed to provide a safe environment to women and their children suffering violence in family and intimate relationships. The service offers a setting conducive to self-healing to women and their children who suffer emotional, physical and sexual violence. A Government Agency also operates a 24-hour/7 days a week helpline service which aims to provide help to callers and to intervene in crisis situations, such as in cases of domestic abuse.

Mme Chair,

The Maltese public healthcare system provides all the required care necessary to victims of violence and it is a standard procedure for healthcare professionals to report to the police any cases in which they suspect that the patient was a victim of violence or abuse. All the necessary treatment is given free of charge including referral to other services such as psychological counselling or other social care services.

Mme Chair,

On Monday Ireland delivered a Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States. While the statement reflects Malta's stance on the elimination of violence against women and girls, my delegation would like to clarify its position, as it has done previously, with respect to the language pertaining to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

While strongly reaffirming our strong support and commitment to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, and the subsequent international instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), my delegation would like to reaffirm the view that any discussion and references to reproductive rights, services and commodities in connection with reproductive health cannot take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life.

Malta does not consider or perceive terms or recommendations that imply or impinge practices resulting in abortion to be used in Malta as acceptable. The national legislation of Malta considers the termination of pregnancy through procedures of induced abortion as illegal.

Mme Chair,

Malta maintains the view that harassment and fear of violence also need to be addressed since they can escalate to more serious forms of violence. In addition, Malta recognizes that violence against women and girls is the result of an imbalance of power between women and men, leading to serious discrimination against women, both within society and the family. Thus, while the personal and professional development of women and the fulfilment of gender equality can do much in discouraging acts of violence against women, this alone will not serve to overcome the problem. Indeed, through the efforts of various Government entities and agencies, as well as the sterling contribution of Church institutions and Non Governmental organisations working in this sector, Malta acknowledges that the prevention, protection and support services, and prosecution are crucial actions in sustaining the fight to eradicate violence against women and girls.