

**Human Rights Council - 26<sup>th</sup> session**  
(10<sup>th</sup> June – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014)

**Annual full-day discussion on Women's Rights**

**17 June 2014**

**Statement by Ireland**

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

Mr President

Women's rights are human rights. This was the simple and yet startling message which rang out from the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995.

Looking back, almost 20 years later, we should be proud of the progress made including, at that most basic level, the long overdue acceptance that women's rights cannot be trivialised, side-lined, or regarded as somehow less than full human rights.

But many challenges remain on the path to true equality. Some of the challenges still to be faced down and won are clear- they include gender-based violence, girls' access and completion of quality education, women's equal access to productive and economic assets, and women's equal participation, representation and leadership in decision making at all levels, including in peace making and peacebuilding and a distressingly long list of other violations and wrongs, occurring in differing proportions in all of our home States

We can see these discriminatory laws and practices for what they are and increasingly, women's voices are to be heard – in particular in new media - identifying the barriers placed in their way and demanding more equitable societies. The twitter hashtag #YesAllWomen has been particularly effective in highlighting the everyday violence, discrimination and harassment faced by so many women worldwide.

But gender stereotypes are more insidious. These outdated but still deep-seated expectations operate at many levels and can arise across a whole range of areas including our appearance, behaviour, interests, sexual orientation or professional lives.

Starting with their effects on the individual, societal stereotypes can burrow into the subconscious and – if left unchecked – limit us from within. More broadly, occupational stereotypes can support and exacerbate the gender pay gap.

Still more damaging is that refusal to live within the constraints of gender stereotypes and expectations can leave us vulnerable to abuses. For when these outdated expectations are challenged, we sometimes see a wholly unjustified reaction of discrimination and violence. In this way, gender stereotypes are at the root of many violations of the rights of girls and women. It is therefore no longer good enough to expect girls and women to ignore or to laugh off the stereotyping which they encounter in their everyday lives.

It is also important to acknowledge that stereotypes are one of the few issues in gender inequality which limit and harm our boys and men as deeply as they do girls and women. For

example, too often among even very young boys, homophobic bullying is the cowardly response to a person who does not appear to conform to outdated gender stereotypes.

In our view overturning stereotypes – which is necessary to marry formal with substantive equality - does not mean that we become blind to the particular challenges faced by girls or women; nor does it require girls and women to simply fit into men's shoes. Girls and women can and should draw on their strengths in exercising and enjoying full equality.

And so we strongly welcome this timely discussion. We would like to ask two questions of the expert panellists, both of which relate generally to educational or outreach measures that States might adopt:

- *Until we overcome the stereotypes which persist in society, how can we support young girls to grow up without internalising those negative stereotypes? and*
- *How can we better challenge men to play their part in challenging stereotypes?*

Thank you