

REPUBLIC OF MALTA



**Statement by Mr. Bernard Mifsud
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**Statement at the 11th Meeting of the Open Working Group on
Sustainable Development Goals**

**Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
6th May 2014 – New York**

Co-chairs,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the revised working document circulated to all delegations earlier in April in preparation for this meeting. We welcome the fact that SDGs now seem to be taking shape following Member States' input in previous meetings.

Co Chairs,

On focus area 5, our general assessment is positive. We welcome the fact that the co-chairs have included point (c) which was one issue proposed by our delegation during previous meetings. Education remains a most important factor not only for women's empowerment but also for eradicating poverty. In this sense, we would like to propose that consideration is given to make this point more specific by including at the end "particularly at the primary and secondary school level". Secondary education for girls and young women remains one of the more problematic areas.

Co-Chairs,

We fully support points (a), (b), (d), (e) and (f) and (g). We consider these elements as essential for focus area 5, and are in line with various international documents already agreed. With regard to point (h), it is not clear to us at this stage how this point can be effectively implemented. We are cautious at listing unpaid care work as a "burden" as in our view, women and men should equally take care of their families and other persons under their care in a just society. While there are various ways at the national and local level how assistance can be given, for instance, in Malta the Government has recently introduced legislation for free of charge child care as an example, we feel that we should not include language that might be misinterpreted to mean that taking care of one's own family, of whatever form, is a burden which should be discarded.

Co-Chairs,

We do however like to point out that point (i) in focus area 5 represents legal difficulties for our delegation. We would thus insist that at the end of this point the following is added “in accordance with the ICPD and the Cairo Programme of Action”. The relevance and importance of these documents as a whole has just been reaffirmed by the Commission on Population and Development at the beginning of April 2014, and we therefore see no impediment as to why UNMS should not comply with those fully agreed provisions. We also recall that such a formulation was agreed within CSW58 just a few weeks ago. We reaffirm our position on the use of the term “reproductive rights” as we have done on previous occasions in this Open Working Group and elsewhere, and we emphasise the fact that any SDGs should reflect language and provisions that make SDGs as widely acceptable as possible. We understand that there are some different interpretations of this term within the UN Membership, however we emphasise that including a reference to the Programme of Action in point (i) in no way would it impinge on any UNMS in implementing these provisions in ways permitted by law at the national level.

I thank you.