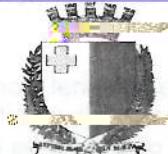


with significant time delays. Groups of women have been instrumental in the development of gender mainstreaming by identifying and highlighting gender issues in various sectors.

MALTA



Malta is pleased to participate in this session and we extend our thanks to the Committee for its continued support and guidance. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership and the UN system for its support.

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

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

Agenda item 3: Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, convened under the theme "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Friday, 2nd March 2012

United Nations, New York

Mme. Chair,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election to preside over this year's Session of the Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

Malta associates itself with the statement made by the European Union and led by Mrs. Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, and Mr. László Székely, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, on behalf of the European Union.

The Government of Malta recognizes the difficulties that women face in rural areas, which often derive from their isolation and lack of road, service delivery and access to proper health care and other services. As a result, rural women are more vulnerable to poverty, living a life of poverty, and leaving progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mme. Chair,,

Malta acknowledges that providing equal opportunities to all men and women, including those in rural settings contributes to alleviating their suffering and promoting gender equality in society, in particular in the regard. Malta is committed to combatting discriminatory treatment in order to empower and enhance the participation of women in the economic and social spheres. Malta endorses gender mainstreaming and the promotion and integration of gender equality in all policies and measures as a means to address different circumstances and needs of men and women in various settings.

Indeed, through the efforts of the International Organization for the Promotion of Equality, Malta is working with relevant stakeholders to develop a code of best practices and a code of conduct to promote equality by providing training, monitoring good practices and encouraging the application of such good practices to enhance the implementation of this principle.

workforce initiatives have been undertaken. Malta recognises women and endeavours on their participation in areas where they are underrepresented. Encouraging more women to participate in employment, which contributes to ensuring the economic independence, reduces their risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The main objective to be achieved by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality is by raising awareness on the need to improve equality through the 'Equality Mark' certification that is given to employers who foster equal opportunities in their business cases, following an equality review. Through this 'Equalitus' Equality Mark employers are encouraged to adopt policies to promote equal treatment and equal opportunities between genders, mainly in the recruitment process; in the working conditions; in the remuneration; in the promotion and uptake of all equality and a sexual harassment policy; in training and career progression; and in the uptake of family friendly measures.

Mme. Chair,

Malta's national Action Plan for combating poverty and social exclusion focuses on promoting three broad priority objectives, namely: the social inclusion prospects of children and young people (such as through better and more inclusive education); active inclusion (such as through better employment prospects and opportunities for all) and equal opportunities (through increased access to the most marginalized and vulnerable population groups).

Malta will reinforce community efforts to mainstream gender equality in all policies and programmes, as well as raise awareness about rights and responsibilities in order to further promote gender equality and the advancement of women in Maltese society.

Mme Chair,

The Government of Malta will continue to dedicate its energy and policies to guarantee the accessibility, quality and sustainability of these essential services, particularly public health services.

The Maltese public health care system provides a comprehensive basket of health services to all persons residing in Malta who are covered by the Maltese social insurance legislation, but also provides necessary care to special groups.

The Health Division offers comprehensive obstetric services ranging from antenatal care through delivery to the postpartum period. In such procedures and others relating to the sexual and reproductive health of women, Malta upholds a principled position that these do not take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life. Malta strongly believes that the right to life extends to the unborn child from the moment of conception, and therefore considers that the lawful abortion as a means of resolving health or social problems is a denial of that right.

Holding in mind this principled position, Malta continues to work hard to implement the relevant international instruments, including the Beijing Platform of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other relevant international instruments.

Mme. Chair,

I conclude with me to underscore the determination of my Government to empower women by protecting and advancing their rights on the basis of equality, and by combatting and preventing discriminatory treatment in order to be able to ensure the realisation of their full potential to participate in all spheres of Maltese society.