

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

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New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Ireland, Ms. Byrne Nason:**

I would like to thank the Peruvian presidency for organizing and presiding over this important debate. I also wish to thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Special Representative Patten and Ms. Sultana for their earlier briefings. It is very encouraging to see a Rohingya woman address the Security Council for the first time.

This is an important day for us, and I wish to thank everybody who has made it happen. It is an understatement to say that Ireland is a strong supporter of the women and peace and security agenda. My country has a deep conviction that women are critical to everything we are trying to achieve in conflict prevention and resolution.

Just last week, Ireland celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the hallmark of the peace process in Northern Ireland. The participation of women in the search for peace was crucial to its success. When two women from the island of Ireland, Mairéad Corrigan and Betty Williams, received the Nobel Prize in 1976 for their efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland, the Nobel Committee stated that they

“refused to bow to bleak scepticism: they simply acted. They never heeded the difficulty of their task: they merely tackled it because they were so convinced that this precisely was what was needed. There was no talk here of ingenious theories, of shrewd diplomacy or pompous declarations. No, their contribution was a far better one: a courageous, unselfish act that proved an inspiration to thousands, that lit a light in the darkness, and that gave fresh hope to people who believed that all hope was gone.”

Those are the kind of efforts we must continue to replicate. Women made a critical difference to peace and conflict resolution in my country, and we believe that women can do the same elsewhere.

While much policy progress has been made in many areas, today we are addressing one area where we remain very challenged — that of addressing conflict-related sexual violence. We are ashamed that women and girls are routinely used as a currency of conflict. The Secretary-General’s report (S/2018/250) does not make for easy reading. It is a clarion call to action for Member States to double down on efforts to address sexual violence in conflict.

We in Ireland firmly believe that the role of civil society at the grassroots level is critical for empowering women in conflict prevention, which the Security Council reaffirmed with resolution 2106 (2013). Ireland is particularly concerned to hear reports of the targeting of high-profile female human rights defenders through crimes of sexual violence. Today we urge Member States to take measures to ensure the adequate protection of women in the civil society space. Ireland also urges the Security Council to assume its own responsibility in that regard and to be consistent and timely in its use of sanctions against perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence.

We all recognize that the majority of victims of conflict-related sexual violence are marginalized women and girls, often living in rural areas that are well beyond the reach of law enforcement and protection. Rural women are vulnerable to displacement and are often forced to flee following struggles for the control of land and resources. Women's physical security is therefore inextricably linked with their political, social and economic security. Women bear the brunt of conflict at every level.

As Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland was pleased to see the real vulnerabilities of rural women highlighted in the Secretary-General's report and in our agreed conclusions, at this year's sixty-second session, on challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. I urge Member States to consider those powerful agreed conclusions, in conjunction with the Secretary-General's recommendations on conflict-related sexual violence.

At the national level, Ireland has incorporated measures to prevent sexual violence into our second action plan on women and peace and security. The Irish Defence Forces have mainstreamed women and peace and security into their policies, with gender advisers and gender focal points incorporated into all units. We have a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, which is very strictly enforced.

Ireland believes that engaging men and boys is critical to preventing sexual violence in conflict. Irish Aid works hard and supports non-governmental partners in delivering such programmes. We are also one of the 14 States that, along with the European Union, are signatories to the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. We fully support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We admire her work and enjoy excellent cooperation with her Office, and we will continue to support her financially.

In conclusion, I wish to return to those two women from Northern Ireland and their Peace Prize day. The Committee also said on that day: "It would be simple to maintain that this is all self-evident and that anyone could say this in despair at the meaningless sufferings of war. Yes, but in reality the solution of each and every human conflict is to be found in the simple and obvious action of someone taking the first steps on the road to reconciliation and cooperation." Those two women from Northern Ireland took those first steps. We can only hope that others follow their example.