

MALTA



**Statement by Mr. Bernard Charles Mifsud,
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations**

**Sixth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
“Human rights, the right to development, global governance”**

**Friday, 13th December 2013
United Nations, New York**

Co-Chairs,

Human rights are the basis for sustainable development. Eradication of poverty can only be achieved if all human beings have their fundamental human rights respected. To cite two examples, what is the use of our efforts to alleviate the poorest of the poor, if their right to education is stifled? What is the use of our efforts to assist those in need to be able to break the cycle of poverty, if their rights for equality before the law and other fundamental rights are not protected?

We also attach great importance to the empowerment of women and girls. It is troubling that in 2013 we are still witnessing gender based discrimination, young girls being deprived of their right to an education solely on the basis of their gender, or women being disenfranchised from inheritance, sending a message that their gender is somehow less equal.

In our view, the SDGs should achieve a clear understanding between all UN Member States, that the time for all such practices is past.

Co-Chairs,

We also recognise the seminal and important progress made since the adoption of the ICPD, a major contribution to the development agenda. We reiterate that the Cairo and Beijing documents are our point of reference. It is for this reason that we underline that the achievements obtained through these documents, including the delicate understandings that led to their adoption and acceptance by UN Member States, should not be unnecessarily disturbed. My delegation would like to reiterate that on certain aspects of the ICPD, Member States' legal position needs to be taken fully into account. We reiterate that on the matter of sexual reproductive health and rights, any future understandings or proposals in this respect should fully reflect the sensitivities of Member States. For Malta, abortion remains illegal at law, and therefore any SDG or undertaking resulting from this process should not result in any commitment on UN Member States that contravenes their national legislation on this sensitive matter. We reiterate our position; that the question of SRHR should be reflected in accordance with the ICPD, which we consider to be the gold standard in providing a way forward in our deliberations.

I thank you.