



## 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women General Discussion

Malta statement delivered by HE Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

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Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to address the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Malta aligns itself with a number of joint statements<sup>1</sup> and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Access to justice is a cornerstone of gender equality and democratic governance and without it, the commitments we have collectively undertaken under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, cannot become a lived reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Malta aligns with the statements delivered by Cyprus on behalf of the European Union, by the EU on behalf of the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and girls, by the UN LGBTI Core Group, by Albania on behalf of 59 countries on the situation of Women and Girls in Afghanistan, by France on behalf of the RG40 group and by Belgium on behalf of 55 countries on SRHR and Access to Justice.



Despite progress, women and girls continue to face barriers that undermine equality before the law and impede access to justice. These barriers are compounded for those in vulnerable situations, including survivors of gender-based violence, women with disabilities, and girls whose access to justice is too often denied or delayed.

Malta firmly believes that justice systems can only be truly inclusive and equitable when they are accessible, accountable, and centred on the needs of victims and survivors. Guided by this principle, we have therefore undertaken a comprehensive review of our legal framework to remove unjustified differentiation between women and men, ensuring that any distinctions are proportionate, non-discriminatory, and grounded in human rights principles.

At the national level, Malta continues to strengthen its response to gender-based violence and its impact on access to justice. Courts issue Temporary Protection Orders and Protection Orders, including during ongoing proceedings where immediate safeguards are required. Domestic violence cases are handled through dedicated court sittings, with specialised magistrates assigned to enhance timeliness, consistency, and victim safety.



Malta has also strengthened its response to the most serious forms of violence against women, including femicide. Recent sentencing reforms require courts to consider whether convictions for the wilful homicide or attempted homicide of a female victim occurred in femicidal circumstances, ensuring that accountability is not diminished in such cases.

Alongside substantive criminal law reform, Malta has reinforced victim-centred procedural safeguards and measures which support timely and proportionate interviews, limit unnecessary repetition, ensure access to interpretation and translation, protect victims' privacy, and allow victims to be accompanied by persons of trust and legal representatives.

These reforms are reinforced by continuous training across the justice chain, including for the judiciary, prosecutors, law enforcement, and frontline professionals, in line with the Istanbul Convention's emphasis on protection, support, and justice.

Madam Chair,



Rights on paper do not guarantee justice in practice, and unless women and girls can invoke laws and navigate systems safely and confidently, the justice system fails one of its most fundamental purposes. We often say that justice delayed is justice denied, but justice is also denied when it becomes inaccessible, when reporting feels unsafe or when accountability fails to protect, support and empower survivors.

Ensuring access to justice for all women and girls in all their diversity, is a shared responsibility. Malta calls on all States to continue reforming discriminatory laws and addressing structural barriers so that justice systems truly serve all.

Let us work together to ensure that justice is not a privilege, but a lived reality for every woman and every girl.

Thank you.