Mr Chair,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of the European Union. I would therefore like to make only a few additional remarks from our national perspective under agenda item 28a.

The Government of Malta has clearly declared its political commitment to strengthening equality between women and men by supporting ongoing measures, creating new initiatives, and through the implementation of specific measures in the context of international obligations, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Malta promotes gender mainstreaming as a strategic tool for safeguarding and promoting gender equality and the inclusion of both genders in the social, political and economic spheres. All Ministries and Government departments are encouraged to gender-mainstream policy-making, draft appropriate laws and create projects and programmes that facilitate processes for gender-mainstreaming. Performance reviews within the public administration reflect these policies. Moreover, the Maltese Government, through the National Commission on the Promotion of Equality, is working towards further strengthening the implementation of gender mainstreaming through the development of a holistic plan to strengthen resources and structures.
Mr Chair,

Women’s economic independence, and consequently their increased participation in the labour market, is a priority for the Maltese Government. At university level women make up approximately 60 per cent of graduates, and over the years the outstanding results of women at university level have been steadily increasing. Whilst consolidating past initiatives such as tax credits, subsidized childcare, increase of paid maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks and family friendly measures so as to facilitate women’s economic independence, the Government is committed to provide childcare for all parents free of charge. The Maltese Government is also committed to reinforce efforts to combat discrimination at the workplace particularly with regard to pay, conditions of work and career opportunities. Moreover, the public sector will be encouraged and supported to develop work practices for better management of flexible conditions of work to enable working parents to find a satisfactory work/life balance.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) will continue auditing companies, government departments and entities and, where appropriate, awarding the Equality Mark. This exercise identifies those enterprises that are deemed equal-opportunity employers and provides assistance to others through training and support in drafting equality and sexual harassment policies. The Equality Mark enhances the corporate image of the entities concerned, thus attracting the best resources available on the labour market.

Mr Chair,

The Maltese Government is also committed to increase the number of women on boards and commissions established by the Government, thereby recognizing women’s abilities, skills and perspectives as valuable resources in society. It is believed that such a commitment by the Government will encourage similar and other initiatives in the private sector. Moreover, a mentoring programme by persons occupying high-level jobs will be implemented with a view to mentor women aspiring to hold decision-making positions.

Also, a directory of Maltese professional women is being developed. This directory will give visibility to professional women by listing their qualifications, experience and skills, and will also identify women in different sectors and give them the possibility of being appointed to serve on Boards, Committees, Representations and any other decision-making positions.

Mr Chair,

Domestic violence is an area of concern for the Maltese Government. Malta was one of the first countries to sign the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
(Istanbul Convention) in 2010. A prevalence study carried out in 2010 has shown that one in four women reported having experienced domestic violence in their lifetime. Malta offers emergency and second stage shelters for women victims of domestic violence and their children. Furthermore, support services have been developed to help women move out of these difficult situations.

The Government has pledged to strengthen the protective measures offered to women and children victims of domestic violence through revisiting the domestic violence legislation introduced in 2006. There is also a clear commitment to monitor the situation by creating a database for a comprehensive overview of domestic violence in Malta in collaboration with professionals and entities working in the field. Government is also committed to strengthen and develop the existing programmes for perpetrators.

Mr Chair,

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality intends to continue its work, in particular to raise awareness on the situation of victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The Commission will target women who are potentially affected by female genital mutilation. At the same time a private member’s bill has been tabled in Parliament calling for criminalising the practice of female genital mutilation. The bill also proposes provisions to criminalise enforced sterilisation and forced marriage.

Furthermore, in order to effectively promote equality between women and men, the Commission will continue developing its awareness raising campaigns and training programmes for educators to sensitise and empower them on equality issues thus addressing artificial concepts of stereotyping from an early age in schools.

The Maltese Government remains committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals through the integration of a gender perspective in all government work, and to ensuring that gender equality remains a policy priority and that the mutual complementarity between gender equality policies and the work of addressing cases of discrimination based on gender is promoted.

Mr Chair,

With regards to the Millennium Development Goals, Malta remains committed to, inter alia, promote gender equality and empower women. The post-2015 process should reinforce Governments’ commitment to the empowerment of women and girls, ensuring gender equality, and on preventing and combating violence against women.
My delegation believes that the post-2015 process should address, *inter alia*, the empowerment and rights of women and girls, gender equality, and on preventing and combating violence against women, as stated by the delegation of the EU in this committee. In this context, the Government of Malta would like to clarify its position, as it has continuously done, with respect to the language pertaining to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights. While reaffirming our strong support and commitment to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, and the subsequent international instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action, my delegation would like to reaffirm that any discussion and references to rights and services in connection with reproductive health cannot take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life. In this regard, any recommendation related to the Overarching Post-2015 Agenda should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health or rights or commodities.

Thank you.