



ICELAND

**The sixty-first session of
the Commission on the Status of Women**

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Mr. Thorsteinn Viglundsson

Minister of Social Affairs and Equality

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61th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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H.E. Mr. Thorsteinn Víglundsson,
Minister of Social Affairs and Equality, Iceland

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Mr. Chairman,

First, let me assure you of Iceland's full support in the important work ahead.

Agenda 2030 provides us with a road map to a safe and prosperous future for all. Ensuring women's empowerment for Planet 50:50 by 2030 will be key to our success in eliminating hunger and poverty and restoring the health of our land and oceans.

Iceland has repeatedly been internationally recognized for having come closest to breaking the glass ceiling and bridging the gender gap. Our progress is the result of conscious efforts.

Since women broke the male political dominance in the early 80s, we have learned that shared power in politics and business allows us to overcome systemic barriers to gender equality in all spheres of life.

Specific measures like affordable quality day care and generous parental leave for mothers and fathers have increased equality in all spheres of society. We have further implemented gender quotas for company boards and public committees; introduced gendered budgeting and taken steps towards the elimination of gender based violence.

We have set our minds on closing the gender pay gap by 2022. In a long-standing cooperation with the labor unions and employers, the Government has developed the Equal Pay Standard following the principle of Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value. The standard was developed in accordance with international ISO standards for possible adoption elsewhere and its

implementation will fulfill the demands of international agreements such as the ILO convention, the Beijing Platform of Action and CEDAW.

Later this month, the Government will introduce a groundbreaking legislation to require larger firms and state institutions to have their equal pay systems certified, based on the standard.

We are also taking action to break the gender segregation in the labour market, improve the opportunities of career development for women and increase the number of women working full time.

Women's empowerment is a key theme in Iceland's development cooperation. Through the United Nations University Gender Equality Studies and Training Program, Icelandic knowledge and experience is transferred to developing states. UN Women is a key partner institution and we have now tripled our contribution to UNFPA to support its important work for sexual and reproductive health and rights, a key to ensuring women's educational and economic opportunities.

Mr. Chair,

All of us must work together if we are to achieve true gender equality. To give men and boys a platform for dialogue on gender equality, Iceland has organized so-called Barbershop events in the various international fora. As one of our commitments to the HeForShe movement, a toolbox to enable others to organize Barbershop events is now up and running on the HeForShe website.

The hardfought progress on gender equality can easily be reversed if we don't keep our vigilance. All of us, men and women, must foster respect for human rights.. We cannot afford to wait any longer: Planet 50:50 is within reach if we all put our minds together.

Thank you.