Human Rights Council – 29th Session (15 June – 03 July 2015)

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions and the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice

Statement by Ireland

17 June 2015

Mr President,

Ireland would like to warmly welcome both the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Chairperson of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice and thank them for their reports and presentations today.

We commend Special Rapporteur Heyns on the timely report to the Council on the implications of information and communications technology for the protection of the right to life. Ireland in general shares your assessment regarding the important role which ICT can play in promoting and protecting all human rights as well as monitoring human rights violations and abuses.

We were interested in the analysis of how ICT can be used in practical ways to protect human rights, for instance through innovations like alert applications, and look forward with interest to further elaboration on these and other possibilities. Nevertheless there remain practical challenges both in accessing new technologies and also in evaluating any relevant evidence of their effects. We note, for example, that in some States access to the internet can be restricted and, in others, it is subject to close surveillance. Not only does this limit the capacity of human rights defenders or civil society actors to highlight human rights violations online, but it may also expose them to additional risk. In this regard, we note the links between this report and the latest report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion, also before the Council this session, covering encryption and anonymity in digital communications. *Does the Special Rapporteur agree that these reports contain a number of mutually reinforcing aspects; and how can States best have regard to both?*

We would also like to ask a question in relation to report's discussion on the use of ICT, in particular body-worn cameras, as a means of preventing violations of the right to life by state agents, including the excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel and those working in prison settings.

Could the Special Rapporteur provide more information on the trial projects which are currently ongoing in this area and further, how best to guarantee the right to privacy when using such equipment?

Turning to the Chairperson of the Working Group, Ms. Aouij;
We share the Working Group's concern regarding discrimination against women and girls, including in family and cultural life. Ireland reiterates that arguments based on cultural diversity or tradition can never justify gender-based discrimination in any aspect of life, including in the family.

We agree with the Working Group's view that attitudes towards issues such as female genital mutilation or other harmful practices, which are deeply entrenched in some societies, must be challenged in an effective manner, with a view to their elimination. We note with regret the report's findings that only 52 countries have explicitly criminalised marital rape and, further that legal provisions in a number of other States allow rapists to marry their victims in order to escape criminal proceedings. Ireland fully supports and echoes the Working Group's recommendation to all States to criminalise marital rape and to repeal laws which grant effective pardons to rapists who marry their victims.

Finally, we note the report's findings that women who do not conform to gender stereotypes, including lesbian, bisexual and transgender women as well as women human rights defenders, are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, violence and criminalisation.

Could the Chairperson elaborate on the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by women, particularly lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, as well as any efforts undertaken by the Working Group to address this issue?

Thank you.