**Statement by Minister Flanagan on Ireland and the UN Commission for the Status of Women**

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Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/press-releases/press-release-archive/2017/may/statement-on-un-commission-for-the-status-of-women/

[Charles](http://www.humanrightsvoices.org/site/articles/?a=9742%5d,Charles" \t "_blank) Flanagan, the foreign minister of Ireland, is under fire following the election of Saudi Arabia to the UNs top women's rights body.  Ireland chairs the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and Saudi Arabia was elected on -April 19, 2017 with 47 countries out of 54 voting in favor of the Saudi candidacy- despite it holding one of the world's worst records on protecting women's rights. Flanagan responded to the election result by defending CSW as a shining "example of best practice.”

In Flanagan’s words:

"Ireland has been a member of the United Nations since 1955.  We participate across the full spectrum of UN activity and we observe the conventions governing participation, including in the conduct of elections. These include the convention that members do not publicly disclose their votes. This applies across all elections (there can be over 20 annually) and is observed for good reasons by member states.  The practice allows for the good functioning of the UN which is made up of member states of very different views and political backgrounds, and helps facilitate outcomes on sensitive issues.

"It is my strong view that it would be very damaging to Ireland’s ability to conduct international relations successfully if we moved away from this established practice.  It would be irresponsible of me to abandon a practice that has been in place for over six decades, observed by all previous governments and is grounded on protecting and promoting the values of small countries on the world stage.

"In meetings with governments of countries where Ireland has human rights concerns, I clearly set out those concerns.  When I was in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia last year I directly raised the need for progress in my discussions with the Saudi authorities.  This is a matter of record.  Ireland uses all the diplomatic channels at our disposal to promote and advance human rights.

"Ireland has a very strong record on promoting the rights of women and girls at the United Nations, commanding trust and respect across the UN membership. As a member of the Human Rights Council (2013-2015) and the Executive Board of UN Women (2012-2013), Ireland worked to highlight a range of issues affecting women and girls. We are a longstanding advocate for the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the UN while the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment is also an integral part of our programme for overseas development.

"Ireland is currently a member of the Commission for the Status of Women.  Our reputation in the area of promoting gender equality is reflected in the fact that in March Ireland assumed the chair of the Commission.

"The Commission is also a hugely important forum for civil society. While the UN has been criticised for failing to ensure that the voices of civil society organisations are heard, the Commission for the Status of Women is an example of best practice."