

Please see below text of the speech delivered by Senator Joe O'Reilly, Leader of the Irish Delegation today at the 145th IPU Assembly.

Congratulations to the President and General Secretary and all the conference organisers on the success of this extraordinary and well conducted global conference. May I thank the Rwandan people for the warmth of their welcome and the efficiency in which they have gone about their part in the conference

A focus on gender equality could not be more relevant than at the present moment. Covid has eroded women's rights casting them as carers, reducing and halting participation in education, increasing violence against women.

The effects of climate change impact mostly on women. 80% percent of displaced persons due to climate change are women. War and genocide are casting women as carers, as sole providers for families and uprooting them from their homes and often sending them to new environments sadly sometimes hostile.

The Oxford English dictionary defines democracy as a system of government for and by the whole population. The full participation of women is axiomatic to that. If women are not members of parliaments they cannot be part of a gender equal Parliament and for that reason in Ireland, and I'm proud that it was my party, we introduced a quota system where a constantly increasing percentage of candidates in each election must be women. We had 30.6% in 2020, we will have 40% in two years time at the next election and that will go on to 50% of the subsequent election.

To break through the glass ceiling for women we need quotas as legislated for by Government and I commend it to all your countries.

In 2021 a Committee on Gender Equality was established in our Parliament to consider the outcome of a Citizen's Assembly on the topic of equality.

In 2021 the speaker of the Irish parliament set up a forum on a family friendly and inclusive Parliament. Wide consultations with members of Parliament, academia and civil society took place. It looked specifically at the composition of committees, at structures and operations and methods and at the creation of a safe and respectful workplace.

51 recommendations emerged and prioritised among will be remote working, proxy voting during yet to be established maternity and paternity leave, increased representation of women on committees and in positions of authority on these committees and hybrid meetings. Constitutional change will be needed but we will do that.

We have in our parliament a dignity and respect statement and we are going to establish more family rooms, facilities for breastfeeding and facilities for childcare will be enhanced.

In Ireland we have an active and well-functioning, well-resourced Women's Parliamentary Caucus and they are doing great work.

Members of parliament from around the globe can I say this to you? Gender equality is also a man's issue. It is at the heart of a civilised society. We cannot have further progress in society without

*equality so let's all unite at this great global international conference of parliamentarians to create gender equal Parliaments that will lead to a gender equal society.
Thank you*