



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Message from President Michael D. Higgins
Irish Consortium of Gender-Based Violence**

Thursday, 7th December, 2023

May I send my best wishes to all those taking part in this year's Conference of the Irish Consortium of Gender-Based Violence.

Guím gach rath ar bhúr obair san cómhhdáil agus do'n todcháí.

The focus of this year's Conference, *Strengthening Survivor-Centred Accountability for Gender-Based Violence*, is a most important one, with its central focus on survivors. With this emphasis you are signifying a paradigm shift towards empowering survivors, ensuring that their voices are heard, and in an ever stranger way holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

The eradication of gender-based violence remains one of the great ethical challenges of our age. There can be no doubt that, as members of a global society, it is our collective duty to halt the devastatingly pervasive cycle of violence targeting women and girls in its various manifestations across the world.

We must all continue to ask ourselves how we can play our own role in the elimination of this great global injustice.

Shamefully, and it is a great human failure, nearly one-third of women aged 15 and above globally have been subjected to physical abuse at least once in their lives. For many of these women, accessing help and support has become increasingly difficult due to war, oppression, displacement, ongoing conflicts and political coups.

This year I had the privilege of speaking at the Dakar 2 Food Summit in Senegal. In Africa, while women represent half of the agricultural workforce, they own only 25% of the land, and face insecurity on the very land on which they work. The failure in access to the security of ownership of land is deepening economic disparities, leaving women ever more susceptible to poverty, abuse, and violence.

The UN High Commission for Refugees has expressed its deep concern regarding the increase in sexual violence and abuse against women and children transiting Europe. The plight of displaced women is particularly distressing, as they seek to navigate insecure routes at night, exposing themselves to heightened risks and forcing them to spend time in overcrowded reception centres, which lack separate spaces for single women and families with children.

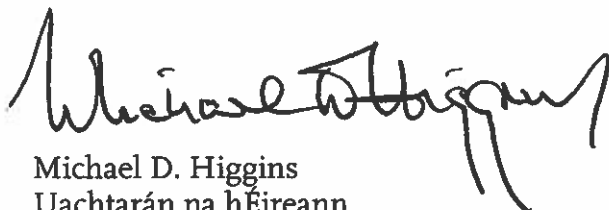
The international community has, by falling short in supporting women, consequently failed humanity. Throughout these 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we are all asked to stand in solidarity with all women, girls, and vulnerable groups worldwide who have endured violence and abuse.

There can be no doubt that the crafting of a society with the stamp of an ever-deepening recognition of equality is a responsibility that must be shared by all, and it must be accepted that any sustaining silence as to the acceptance of a society that allows for injustice, inequalities and violence to persist unchallenged perpetuates a society that fails us all.

May I offer solidarity to all those who work so hard and with such dedication in addressing what is one of the most serious ethical challenges of our time.

May I wish the Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence a most fruitful conference, and every success in your work which is vital.

Traosláim libh. Beir beannacht



Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland