

## Transcript: H.E. Mr. David Donoghue, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

### **Introduction:**

I don't think Ambassador Donoghue needs an introduction. I think you all know him. He's the ambassador of Ireland here to the U.N., and he was very active as the co-facilitator with Ambassador Dina Kavar in the High Level summit for Refugees and Migrants, so we really need to thank him for his negotiation skills, because if not for his negotiations, we wouldn't have a New York Declaration. Let's give him a hand. But I want to say something also about him which is very important. On entering the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1975, Ambassador Donoghue served in the Anglo-Irish division, dealing with Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations, where he would serve again on two further occasions. He was involved in the negotiation of both the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Good Friday Agreement. He served as Irish head of the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in Belfast from 1995 to 1999. So let's welcome Ambassador Donoghue.

### **Ambassador Donoghue:**

Well thank you very much for those kind remarks. Every time I hear my C.V. being delivered in public, I make a note to myself that I'm going to have to shorten it and not give the impression I've been around for a hundred years. Anyway, it's a great pleasure to be here, and I must say I found the discussion very, very inspiring on this particular topic. And you can imagine that in a negotiation such as the one on what became the New York Declaration, there is a multiplicity of themes which come up and where we really would benefit from more in-depth consideration, but what is remarkable about the early childhood education point, which I'm happy to say got into the declaration eventually, was that no member state actually brought that up. It was in fact a classic example of how NGOs can have a direct impact on a negotiation. What happened, essentially, was we had a draft which appeared at the end of June. We didn't have a specific reference to early childhood education, although there were plenty of references in the draft as a whole to human rights and freedoms and entitlements of children. But there was no specific reference to early childhood education. But it was a theme which came through in the contact we had with NGOs and civil society during the negotiations, and I'm glad to say that, although it is not obvious or automatic that you can have NGO participation in-depth up to the end of a negotiation like that... [*Technical difficulty*]. What I wanted to say was that thanks to civil society, my fellow co-facilitator and I inserted a reference to early childhood education into the draft and we didn't encounter any resistance from member states. I think it is the first time there has been a specific reference to early childhood education at this level, at the U.N., so my co-facilitator Dina Kavar and I were pleased and proud that we were able to do that. Of course there is a strong link to the 2030 Agenda. By coincidence I was also the co-facilitator in those negotiations with the ambassador of Kenya, so perhaps that was on my mind, but there are various references to early childhood more generally in the 2030 Agenda, and I would feel that there one could read the commitments made in the NY Declaration against those already made in the 2030 Agenda. They are to be seen

holistically. The fact that both were adopted within a year of each other binds them together in a way. They are two clearly linked documents. So, overall, this was a very good example of how NGOs can have a direct impact on negotiators, and I will use this in the future as a good example of what should happen. The point I wanted to make a moment ago is that it is not always easy in a universal negotiation of this kind to bring in civil society. You'll be aware that there is a tendency occasionally to try to exclude them towards the end of a rather tense negotiation when the emphasis shifts very much to the responsibility of member states to agree to final compromises, to final language, and so on. In this negotiation as in the SDG negotiation, happily it proved possible to have pretty good input from civil society right to the very end, and that's the main point I wanted to make today. For me, it was terrific to hear the speakers today [technical difficulty]. I learned a lot on the detail of early childhood education from all of the panelists and I was delighted to be here. I only regret that we didn't have that kind of conversation early on in our negotiations, in which case we would have been able to get this reference in from the very beginning. Thank you.