

Human Rights Council – 25th session (3-28 March 2014)

Statement by Ireland on the presentation of its Universal Periodic Review National Interim Report

21 March 2014

Thank you Mr. President.

I am pleased to update the Council on the progress on human rights which Ireland has made since its UPR in 2011. We have prepared a voluntary interim report, copies of which have been distributed in the room, and which is also available online.

A number of recommendations made to Ireland concerned **prison conditions**. The *Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015* includes a 40-month capital expenditure plan which contains a major programme of works to improve prison conditions. This plan provides for the completion of the installation of in-cell sanitation in all remaining prison cells. Ireland is also taking a number of strategic actions to reduce overcrowding and end the detention of children.

We are making progress in relation to the **rights of persons with disabilities**. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill 2013 was published in July 2013 and is currently under consideration by the Oireachtas (Parliament). The Bill provides a series of options to support people who have difficulties in terms of decision-making capacity to exercise autonomy in decision-making to the greatest extent possible. Its enactment will be a key step toward our ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

With regard to the **rights of the child**, a referendum to amend the Constitution to acknowledge and affirm the rights of children was passed on 10 November 2012. While a challenge to the Provisional Referendum Certificate is currently pending before the Supreme Court, we hope that this change can soon be effected, thereby providing an additional layer of protection to children's rights in the State's basic law. In addition, child and family services will now be the sole focus of a single dedicated State agency, the Child and Family Agency, overseen by a single dedicated Government Department. This represents an essential response to recent reports on child protection failings, including inconsistency and fragmentation in service provision.

This is a sample of the work undertaken to better protect human rights in Ireland, and the report details further efforts. Many initiatives are ongoing, including in such areas as gender recognition and the ratification of key international human rights instruments. Ireland looks forward to again demonstrating its commitment to the protection of human rights and to the UPR system at its next review in 2016.

I thank you, Mr. President.