

**Discrimination against Women**

Acceded: 23 December 1985.

Ireland's second and third periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/IRL/2-3) which is scheduled for consideration at the Committee's June 1999 session; the fourth periodic report is due 22 January 2003.

*Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraphs (b) and (c) of article 13; paragraph 3 of article 15; paragraph 1 (d) and (f) of article 16; paragraphs 1 (b), (c) and (d) of article 11; paragraph (a) of article 13.

**Torture**

Signed: 28 September 1992.

**Rights of the Child**

Signed: 30 September 1990; ratified: 28 September 1992. Ireland's initial report (CRC/C/11/Add.12) was considered at the Committee's January 1998 session; the second periodic report is due 27 October 1999.

*Reservations and declaration:* General declaration on signature.

**REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES****Committee on the Rights of the Child**

Ireland's initial report (CRC/C/11/Add.12, April 1996) was considered by the Committee at its January 1998 session. The report prepared by the government contains information on, *inter alia*: the Child Care Act 1991; the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and the Commission on the Family; the definition of the child and minimum ages; the Status of Children Act 1987; the right to life of the unborn and laws related to abortion; the Criminal Evidence Act 1992; name and nationality and preservation of identity; access to appropriate information; the Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act 1989; alternative care and supervision orders; the Family Law Maintenance of Spouses and Children Act, as amended in 1981; the Kilkenny report and measures to address child abuse and treatment for victims of abuse; the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Investigation Unit, established in 1993; the "Stay Safe" Child Abuse Prevention Programme; the Domestic Violence Bill 1995; children with disabilities; education and schools; health and health services; drug, alcohol and substance abuse and treatment; social security and child welfare; the juvenile justice system; the Travelling Community and the report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community; and key concerns raised by NGOs in consultations with the government prior to preparation of the report.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CRC/C/15/Add.85) welcomed, *inter alia*: the welfare services established for the benefit of children and their families; the high level of education and advanced health system; efforts aimed at law reform, for example, enactment of the Child Care Act of 1991 and its amended version of 1997, the Family Law Act of 1995, the Domestic Violence Act of 1996, the Family Law (Divorce) Act of 1996, and the drafting of the Education and Adoption

Bills; the numerous efforts and concrete measures taken to protect children from sexual exploitation, including sex tourism; and the enactment of the Sexual Offences (Jurisdiction) Act of 1996 and the drafting of the Child Trafficking and Pornography Bill of 1997.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included: the lack of a comprehensive national policy on the rights of the child that fully incorporates the principles and provisions of the Convention; the fact that welfare policies and practices do not adequately reflect the child rights based approach set out in the Convention, and the insufficient emphasis given to preventive measures; the lack of an independent monitoring mechanism such as an Ombudsperson or a Child Rights Commissioner, accessible to children for dealing with complaints of violations of their rights and providing remedies for such violations; the fact that in some instances statistics on the situation of children are being collected for children up to the age of 15 only; the lack of adequate and systematic training, on the principles and provisions of the Convention, for professional groups working with and for children; and the fact that the potential of the non-governmental sector in contributing to the development of children rights' policy is not fully realized.

In terms of the definition of the child, the Committee expressed concern over the various low age limits set in domestic legislation. With respect to the principle of non-discrimination, concern was expressed over the disparities in access to education and health services and the difficulties still faced by children from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including children belonging to the Traveller community, children from poor families, and refugee children, as to the enjoyment of fundamental rights, including access to education, housing and health services.

The Committee also expressed concern over: the fact that the views of the child are not generally taken into account, including within the family, at schools, and in society; the lack of prohibition in legislation of corporal punishment within the family environment; the existence of child abuse and violence within the family, and the lack of mandatory reporting mechanisms for cases of child abuse; the disadvantaged situation of children born from unmarried parents due to the lack of appropriate procedures to include the identity of the father in the birth registration of the child; the lack of guarantees for the child to maintain contact with both parents after divorce; the low rate of breastfeeding and the lack of awareness about the positive impact of this practice on children's health; the incidence of teenage suicide and the lack of adequate programmes addressing adolescent health related problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse and early pregnancies; the lack of a national policy to ensure the rights of children with disabilities, and the lack of adequate programmes and services addressing the mental health of children and their families.

The Committee acknowledged the National Anti-Poverty Strategy but was particularly concerned about the incidence of child poverty and homeless children. Concern