



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 20 June 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Haidar

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Eighth periodic report of Ireland (CEDAW/C/IRL/8; CEDAW/C/IRL/QPR/8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ireland joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Ireland**, introducing his country's eighth periodic report (CEDAW/C/IRL/8), said that, during the period under review, the Government had made significant progress in promoting equality for women. It had implemented the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020, the whole-of-government policy framework for the advancement of gender equality, and was currently finalizing a successor strategy. A consultation process was under way so that women's organizations, civil society and women and young people throughout Ireland could contribute to that process. The new strategy would have strong links with the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028 and the recently adopted National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy.
3. The Government was working to eliminate barriers to access to public services for women and girls from Traveller, Roma and migrant communities. For example, the health system had recruited and trained Traveller women as community health peer workers in order to provide the Traveller community with information about culturally appropriate care. The success of such projects was reflected in higher rates of breast and cervical cancer screening among Traveller women. The Government addressed the unique needs and challenges of migrant women through a combination of mainstream public services and targeted support, delivering improved outcomes in areas such as employment and housing. It had conducted a wide-ranging public consultation to seek the perspectives of people of all backgrounds and genders, particularly migrant women, as part of the development of the new national migration and integration strategy, due to be published in 2026.
4. As the National Strategy for Women and Girls had highlighted the need for greater gender balance in decision-making, the Government had launched the Balance for Better Business initiative in 2018 in order to improve gender representation on corporate boards. The result had been a significant increase in the percentage of female directors; Ireland now ranked sixth in the European Union for female board representation.
5. Legislation had been introduced whereby political parties were required to meet a 40 per cent gender quota for candidates in parliamentary elections. Other measures to promote women's political participation included the introduction of maternity leave entitlements for elected members of local authorities and members of parliament, a scheme to encourage political parties to increase the number of women candidates standing in local elections and the provision of funding for civil society organizations that worked to encourage more women to enter politics. The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy included a commitment to increase participation by Traveller and Roma women in political and public life. Action had also been taken to improve gender balance in leadership roles in academia and the judiciary.
6. To support women with caring responsibilities, the Government had introduced several initiatives to improve access to childcare. Public funding of early learning and childcare had burgeoned to unprecedented levels. The State provided free preschool education for two years under the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme, with over 70 per cent of families on low incomes reporting that, without the Programme, their child would not have been able to attend preschool. The Equal Start scheme, launched in 2024 was specifically designed to improve access to early learning and childcare for children from disadvantaged households, particularly Traveller children.
7. The Government had also taken steps to support women's labour market participation and improve their working conditions. In 2024, paid parent's leave for all parents of children under 2 years of age had been extended to 9 weeks per parent, while unpaid parental leave had been extended to 26 weeks. Since November 2024, female employees could postpone their maternity leave if they required ongoing treatment for a serious health condition. All workers had the right to 5 days' paid sick leave. Workers on low incomes, many of whom

were women, benefited from the national minimum wage, which had risen to €13.50 per hour. To tackle the gender pay gap, the Government had focused on reporting as a means of identifying the organizations and sectors with the widest pay gaps. Under the Gender Pay Gap Information Act, organizations with 50 or more employees were required to report on their gender pay gap.

8. To enable women and girls to achieve their potential within the education system, the Government was working to increase their participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as the gateway to higher skilled, better paid jobs. Between 2021 and 2025, the number of women in apprenticeships had almost doubled, from 1,321 to 2,591. Over half of women progressed to higher education.

9. Significant efforts were being made to combat domestic violence and gender-based violence. In 2019, Ireland had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The Domestic Violence Act of 2018 had strengthened the protections available to women who experienced domestic violence and had made coercive control a criminal offence. In 2022, the Government had launched the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, which had fundamentally reformed its approach. In 2024, a new agency, Cuan, had been established to deliver services to victims, put in place robust national standards and led awareness campaigns. Ireland had become one of the first countries in the world to introduce paid domestic violence leave.

10. The Government had also introduced significant measures to combat trafficking in persons. Under the National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking for the period 2023–2027, it was working to implement a more victim-centred approach, raise awareness among service providers and provide appropriate training.

11. The Women's Health Taskforce had been established in 2019 with the aim of improving women's health outcomes. Led by the Department of Health, it used innovative methodologies to listen to women and develop a better understanding of their health needs. A new Women's Health Action Plan had been published for the period 2024–2025. As women's health remained a priority for the Government, €180 million in additional funding had been allocated since 2020, including for measures such as the provision of free contraception for women aged 17 to 35 years, and free hormone replacement therapy products for women experiencing menopause.

12. In May 2018, the people of Ireland had voted in a referendum to amend the Constitution to remove the longstanding ban on abortion. Subsequently, on 20 December 2018, the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act had been signed into law. The Government was committed to ensuring safe and equitable access to termination of pregnancy services. All 19 maternity hospitals provided termination services, and the number of community providers had risen to 455.

13. One difficult legacy issue was that of the wrongs visited upon Irish women and their children in mother and baby homes and county homes. The Government regarded the 2021 report of the Commission of Investigation and the official State apology that had followed as the starting point for further restorative measures. Progress had included the adoption of the Birth Information and Tracing Act of 2022, under which some 16,000 applications for information had been received, and the establishment of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payments Scheme for surviving mothers. In addition, many women who had spent time in Magdalene laundries had benefited from a redress scheme that had been set up to respond to the wrongs they had experienced. In developing its response to historical wrongs and ongoing challenges, the Government worked closely with civil society and with those with lived experience.

14. Ireland remained a committed advocate for gender equality in international forums such as the European Union and the Group of 20. It had also deepened its engagement with the United Nations. For example, key reforms had been instituted in the area of disability as part of the ongoing efforts of Ireland to incorporate the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into its laws and practices, following ratification of the Convention in 2018. In that context, laws on decision-making capacity had been amended to enable persons with disabilities to exercise greater autonomy when making decisions

concerning their lives. A new National Disability Inclusion Strategy would be published in the coming weeks.

15. **A representative of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Ireland,** said that, at a time of global crisis and backsliding on human rights, the Government deserved credit for its international leadership on gender equality. However, international ambition for gender equality was not always matched with domestic action on gender equality. A pattern had emerged of procrastination in ratifying key treaties and removing reservations, delays in incorporating international standards into national law and failure to implement treaty body recommendations, including those of the Committee. Despite being a wealthy and stable democracy, the country's progress in ensuring women's and girls' access to justice, economic empowerment and political participation was frustratingly slow. In areas such as the needs of Traveller and Roma women and access to abortion, clear and comprehensive policies and strategies were simply not being implemented. Similarly, in the area of combating domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence had highlighted the need to bridge the gap between policies and legislation and the reality on the ground.

16. Women in Ireland suffered disproportionately from an inadequate and overly bureaucratic social welfare system that was not benchmarked against the cost of living or indexed to national wages. Some 4.8 per cent of women still lived in poverty. The gender pay and pension gaps remained stark, and none of the largest listed companies in the primary stock market index in Ireland (ISEQ 20) had a female chief executive officer. A series of concerns related to the situation of women, including in terms of the impact of imprisonment on their family lives, prison overcrowding and the need for prison policy to be reformed in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). The Commission had also observed a regression in women's participation in political life. More than three quarters of parliamentary seats were currently held by men and only 3 of 15 cabinet ministers were women. Ireland ranked ninety-ninth in the world for female representation in national parliaments.

17. Although Ireland had a genuine commitment to the principles enshrined in the Convention, that commitment was not matched with action that transformed the lived realities of its women and girls. The Commission therefore encouraged the Committee to look beyond the adoption of policies and to question the State Party about implementation, achievement and evidenced outcomes.

Articles 1–6

18. **Ms. Pia-Comella** said that the Committee noted with regret that the State Party had no intention of withdrawing its reservations to the Convention. The Committee respected the result of the referendum on the amendment of article 41 (2) of the Constitution but remained concerned about the outdated language on women's "duties in the home". In that regard, she wished to know whether the State Party intended to carry out an independent evaluation of the referendum or planned to implement the legislative and policy recommendations of relevant gender equality bodies. She would be grateful if the delegation could give a specific time frame for the adoption of the equality bill that had been published in January 2025.

19. While the Committee welcomed the official apologies issued to the survivors of mother and baby homes, Magdalene laundries, schools and residential institutions and the practice of symphysiotomy, it remained concerned at the lack of rights-based investigations and reparation for the abuses committed. It also noted the failure to adequately implement the European Court of Human Rights judgment in the *O'Keeffe v. Ireland* case. She therefore wished to know what steps were being taken to provide up-front payment for equivalent health and community care services, under the Magdalene restorative justice scheme, to women residing abroad. She wondered what measures had been taken to address the concerns that had been raised about certain commissions of investigation, such as the Farrelly Commission, and whether the Government would commit to embedding human rights and gender equality principles into its model of investigation. She would be interested to know whether the mandate of the proposed commission of investigation into historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders might be extended to other schools.

Lastly, she would be grateful for an update on the establishment of a National Centre for Research and Remembrance and wondered how the State Party would ensure that the voices of victims and survivors were taken into account.

20. **A representative of Ireland** said that there were no plans to conduct further work on the referendums. On the basis of the 45 recommendations made by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, the Joint Oireachtas Committee had drawn up a list of 205 actions, 172 of which were in progress and 18 of which had been completed. They covered areas such as domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, the role of education in challenging gender norms and stereotypes, the impact of pay and workplace conditions on gender equality and achieving gender equality in leadership, politics and public life.

21. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme, which had been established in 2013 on the basis of an interdepartmental process, remained open and was available to people living outside Ireland. The payments that had been awarded under the Scheme ranged from €11,000 to €100,000. In October 2024, the symbolic weekly payment made in recognition of survivors' difficult experiences had been increased from €100 to €120 for recipients aged below 66 years. Steps had been taken to examine 231 cases in which the length of stay in an institution was disputed; additional payments had been made in the majority of those cases and a report would soon be published.

22. The Farrelly Commission of Investigation, like other such commissions, had been comprised of members of the judiciary, who were constitutionally independent in the exercise of their functions. In the light of its findings, the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality had commissioned a non-statutory investigation into specific areas of child safeguarding.

23. **A representative of Ireland** said that, while some survivors had been disappointed to find that they were not eligible for payments under the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme, the Scheme was just one element in a large suite of actions designed to respond to survivors of mother and baby homes and other institutions. The priority need of persons who, as young children, had spent less than six months in such institutions had been identified as obtaining access to records. Pursuant to the Birth Information and Tracing Act, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Child and Family Agency had processed 16,000 applications for information within the statutory time frame.

24. Other actions included the provision of counselling and the development of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance, which was intended to honour everyone who had lived in industrial schools, Magdalen Laundries, mother and baby homes, reformatories and other similar institutions or who had been affected by historical adoption procedures. A written consultation process and in-person engagement events had ensured that the planning of the Centre would be directly informed by the experiences of those who had been most affected.

25. **A representative of Ireland** said that under the revised Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme that had been launched in 2021, 128 applications had been approved and 65 had been refused; of the latter, 45 decisions had been appealed, 2 of which had been reversed. In June 2023, the Government had approved proposals for ongoing support for survivors, including enhanced health, education and training services. The related legislation was progressing through the Oireachtas (the parliament) and was expected to be passed in the coming weeks. In addition, an independent advocacy organization had been engaged to provide support to survivors. A commission had been established to undertake a scoping inquiry with respect to historical sexual abuse in schools run by religious orders. A report had been published in 2024, and high-level government officials had been convened to draft the commission's terms of reference.

26. **A representative of Ireland** said that the actions that had been taken with respect to women who had undergone the medical procedure of symphysiotomy without their consent satisfied the legal requirements of the State. All available facts had been set out in a report, a voluntary person-centred scheme established in 2014 had made awards to 399 women and the health services continued to provide medical care to the women affected.

27. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality had made recommendations on automatic enrolment in pension schemes for persons with low income and the introduction of an individualized social protection system. The first automatic enrolment programme would become operational towards the end of 2025, while the first pay-related benefit for jobseekers had been introduced in March 2025. The benefit was based on an individual's social insurance contributions rather than on the household-based model. Steps were being taken to examine the viability of extending the individualized model to parental leave.

28. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2025 had been approved and referred to the Office of the Attorney General for priority drafting of the related legislation. The Government had also approved the inclusion of disadvantaged socioeconomic status among the discriminatory grounds set out in the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act; that decision would be further examined to assess the potential impact on small and medium-sized enterprises.

29. **Ms. Draz** said that she wished to know what mechanisms were in place to ensure clear lines of accountability and coordination across all levels of government in the State Party in the delivery of gender equality.

30. She would welcome an update on the timeline for the adoption of the new National Strategy for Women and Girls, and on any report that had been published on the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the previous Strategy. It would be useful to understand how any lessons learned would be incorporated in the new Strategy, which should be aligned with the standards set out in the Convention. She would also like to know about any specific actions, dedicated resources or monitoring structures set out in the Strategy that were inclusive of Traveller and Roma women.

31. She would be grateful for an account of the measures in place to support, implement and monitor, across public bodies, the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty established by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, and of the content, coverage and frequency of any training on gender equality delivered to public officials. She would welcome confirmation of whether such training was mandatory at the national and local levels.

32. She wished to know whether the Commission's mandate included explicit responsibility for promoting the ratification of international and regional instruments and frameworks, how the State Party ensured that the Commission received a sustainable budget, whether the selection and appointment process for Commission members met the relevant international standards and whether the State Party intended to take action on the recommendation made to it by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions to amend the relevant legislation to establish a fixed minimum term for the appointment of Commission members.

33. **Ms. Mikko** said that she would like to know what measures the State Party was taking to ensure that 40 per cent or more of members of the boards and executive leadership teams of State-owned enterprises, major public bodies and public financial and economic institutions were women. It would be helpful to know whether the quota for women candidates for election to the Dáil Éireann (lower house of parliament) would be applied to local elections and what steps were being taken to amend the Electoral Act to raise the quota of female candidates to 50 per cent in order to achieve parity at all levels of government.

34. The delegation might provide details of any efforts to increase the representation of women from Traveller communities and other ethnic minorities in legislative bodies.

35. **A representative of Ireland** said that, in terms of monitoring and accountability of gender equality mechanisms, the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality was required to report to an Oireachtas committee responsible for equality. The new National Strategy for Women and Girls, which was close to completion, was being drafted with input from representatives of government departments and agencies, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and civil society and had been informed by the recommendations that had arisen from the evaluation of a number of equality strategies. Intersectionality was a key

principle in the new Strategy, and work was ongoing to embed within it a focus on Traveller and Roma women.

36. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission had legal powers to monitor the application of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, which all government departments were required to incorporate into their strategies.

37. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 set out the functions of the Commission, whose mandate had subsequently been expanded through additional legislation such as the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, which the Commission had been given the authority to enforce. The Commission's annual budget was set pursuant to a dedicated vote. In 2025, its budget allocation amounted to €9.8 million, which was over €1 million higher than in 2024 and over €3.5 million higher than 10 years previously. Commission members were selected through the process followed by the Public Appointments Service, without the Government's involvement.

38. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Technical Support Instrument project funded by the European Commission would be concluded in August 2025. The resulting toolkit for gender mainstreaming in public policies and budgets would be part of the new National Strategy for Women and Girls.

39. An online course entitled "Equality and Human Rights in the Public Service", which had been developed in conjunction with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, had been completed by 6,954 public officials. The topics covered in the course included discrimination and dignity at work, unconscious bias and cultural competence. The Institute of Public Administration offered a Professional Diploma in Human Rights and Equality, which covered gender mainstreaming.

40. **A representative of Ireland** said that Balance for Better Business, a business-led review group supported by the Government, set and monitored voluntary targets for gender representation on boards and senior leadership teams. Since the group's launch in 2018, the proportion of female directors of companies listed on the stock market had risen from 18 per cent to 40 per cent. Ireland was now ranked sixth in the European Union for female representation on executive boards and fifth on leadership teams. In May 2024, Balance for Better Business had set new targets to be achieved by 2028, including a goal of exceeding 40 per cent for female representation on all private boards and leadership teams. To that end, a road map had been designed that focused on areas including talent development and retention and enhancing pathways to strategic leadership for women.

41. **A representative of Ireland** said that there were no plans to apply the quota for women candidates to local as well as national elections.

42. **A representative of Ireland** said that the current National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy included specific actions designed to promote the political participation of Traveller and Roma women. A policy paper had been drafted setting out the need to increase the capacity of Roma individuals to engage in policymaking processes. Women for Election, a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to increasing women's political participation, received government funding for initiatives aimed at marginalized women.

43. **Ms. Pia-Comella** said that it would be interesting to read the paper concerning the policymaking capacity of Roma individuals.

44. She wished to encourage the State Party to facilitate multi-year, rather than annual, budgeting processes for national institutions to ensure their sustainability.

45. **Ms. Mikko** said that she wished to encourage the State Party to move towards full gender parity in electoral lists.

46. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Government recognized the importance of multi-year budgeting and was seeking to move away from annual budgets. Electoral processes were candidate-driven rather than list-based, and funding was provided to political parties to help them meet the quota of 40 per cent for female candidates.

47. **A representative of Ireland** said that the policy paper that had been referred to focused on developing policymaking capacity in a broad range of community structures. A copy of it would be provided to the Committee.

48. **Ms. Tisheva** said that she wished to know how the State Party coordinated policies on gender-based violence and gender stereotypes, whether there were plans to adopt a comprehensive strategy to counter gender stereotypes at all levels of government and in all sectors and in a manner that also involved men and boys and how the State Party ensured an intersectional approach to gender stereotyping. She also wished to know when it would revise the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act and develop a comprehensive action plan covering multiple grounds for discrimination, including sex and race.

49. It would be useful to know whether the State Party planned to ban forced sterilization, which were still performed on women with disabilities, medical interventions on intersex children and so-called conversion practices for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women; what measures it was taking to ensure that survivors of female genital mutilation received protection and had access to services; and whether it intended to integrate services and care for victims into general health services or to increase the number of specialized facilities that dealt with the practice.

50. Regarding gender-based violence, policy implementation appeared to be ineffective, institutional responsibilities were unclear and poorly coordinated, there were gaps in data collection, insufficient funding and delays in accessing justice, and the needs of marginalized victims were not taken into account. Accordingly, she would appreciate information on the specific measures being taken to ensure access to specialized, independent and community-based legal aid for women victims, with a focus on minority groups such as Travellers, Roma, migrants and asylum-seekers; the ways in which the State Party would further strengthen the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency, including in terms of data collection, research capacity and cooperation with women's NGOs; the steps being taken to work on a regular basis with facilities for survivors, including women with disabilities, migrant women and women from other minority groups; any plans to incorporate the various laws on consent into a single law on sexual offences; the timeline for better protecting survivors' medical information; and plans to increase multi-year funding for women's NGOs providing services to victims of domestic, sexual or gender-based violence.

51. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that, notwithstanding the State Party's considerable efforts to combat trafficking in persons in recent years, there were still significant areas of concern, especially with regard to the identification and protection of victims, particularly girls, and the successful prosecution of perpetrators. The decision to reclassify child trafficking victims as victims of sexual exploitation excluded girls from trafficking statistics, obscured the true extent of child trafficking and might prevent the identification of girls who were vulnerable to trafficking. While the amended Criminal Law Act was an important step forward, it was not yet in force and did not address all concerns related to victim identification and access to support services. She wondered, therefore, what steps the State Party was taking to improve the identification of trafficking victims and ensure that none were excluded from receiving services, including shelter, and how it planned to ensure that the judiciary had the knowledge necessary to increase the number of prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators of trafficking. Lastly, she would welcome information on the State Party's plans to increase the prosecution of buyers of commercial sex.

52. **A representative of Ireland** said that sexual education and in-person and online relationships were addressed in the Social, Personal and Health Education curricula, which had been developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, in cooperation with teachers, students, parents and the public. The new curriculum for the senior cycle, which covered students aged 15 to 18 years, had been approved, with schools required to apply it from September 2027. The topics covered included respecting boundaries, navigating difficult conversations, dealing with break-ups, discussing the need for consent, examining how positive and harmful attitudes towards gender were perpetuated in the media, online and in society, recognizing where people were experiencing discrimination, exploring the root causes and consequences of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, understanding the components of sexual health and how to access sexual health information and services,

investigating the possible influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations, and discussing image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape.

53. **A representative of Ireland** said that the development of the new National Strategy for Women and Girls had involved the establishment of an interdepartmental committee comprising representatives from all government departments and a number of relevant agencies, and consultation with officials who worked on the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and its implementation, LGBTQI+ issues and disability inclusion.

54. Ireland had been the first country to apply the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development framework on masculinities. Data had been compiled on relevant indicators, which made it possible to measure the prevalence of norms of restrictive masculinities in the population. The data were published in Statistical Spotlight No. 6, entitled “Gender Norms in Ireland”, and disseminated through national media. It had been clear from the findings that, notwithstanding significant progress, restrictive views on gender roles and responsibilities remained and that the data required to measure the prevalence of social norms and track progress were scarce. The framework would be integrated into the next National Strategy for Women and Girls.

55. **A representative of Ireland** said that Coimisiún na Meán, the media regulator, expected media service providers to take steps to facilitate greater inclusion in the sector. The inaugural forum for the media sector had been held in April 2025, under the themes of ensuring authentic representation, monitoring diversity, equality and inclusion in the media, attracting and retaining new employees and breaking down barriers for minority groups to access careers in the sector. Coimisiún na Meán had also issued a report on women’s music on the radio with the aim of supporting gender balance. In addition, it was developing guidance materials and educational initiatives on online activities, including the upcoming launch of a four-week nationwide advertising campaign in cinemas focused on the rights of Internet users, which would emphasize the ongoing importance of reporting illegal or harmful content on online platforms.

56. **A representative of Ireland** said that staff of the Women’s Health Service and the Anti-Human Trafficking Team of the Health Service Executive received training in the prevalence and impact of female genital mutilation, and both departments had a specialized psychologist available. Female genital mutilation was included in the assessment of trafficking victims, and referrals for medical treatment were made to the dedicated treatment service of the Irish Family Planning Association, while the Women’s Health Service operated sexual health clinics and conducted outreach. The Health Service Executive had updated the relevant resources and support available through its website and had completed work on a national training strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation. Furthermore, female genital mutilation was covered in the core curriculum for postgraduate education in obstetrics and gynaecology, and a national clinical guideline for the management of such cases had been issued to ensure that clinicians provided evidence-based, culturally sensitive care.

57. The Irish Family Planning Association received government funding to provide free specialized medical care and counselling to women who had experienced female genital mutilation. Funding had been approved for a specialist clinic for the treatment of female genital mutilation with a view to ensuring care for marginalized women, supporting continuity of care, reducing wait times from eight months to four weeks and expanding capacity to meet the significantly increased demand for high quality medical and psychological care for women and girls who had undergone or were at risk of female genital mutilation.

58. **A representative of Ireland** said that forced sterilization was an offence in the country, in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. While drafting legislation to ban conversion practices was on the priority list for the current legislative session, the work was complex, as there were constitutional implications, for instance with regard to religious bodies.

59. **A representative of Ireland** said that work was ongoing to transpose elements of European law that were required to update the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act,

including plans to criminalize online incitement of hatred or violence against women, in accordance with the Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The study on familicide had given rise to over 200 recommendations, not all of which had been internally consistent; therefore, consultations had been conducted in 2024 with families bereaved by familicide or domestic violence, government agencies and other stakeholders. As the concept of domestic homicide reviews was a key outcome of the consultations, the authorities were examining the relevant procedures in other jurisdictions and how they could be applied in the Irish context. Furthermore, multi-agency critical response teams would be introduced and legislation would be adopted to remove the guardianship rights of a parent who killed the other parent.

60. As national laws on sexual offences were comprehensive, priority had been given to strengthening existing laws, for instance through the introduction of a definition of consent, and improving protections for victims and survivors, including from revictimization during the criminal justice process.

61. An amendment was being prepared that would make judges in sexual offence cases responsible for determining whether the notes of a victim's counselling sessions contained material of sufficient relevance to warrant disclosure, bearing in mind the victim's right to privacy and the accused's right to a fair trial. The idea was to discourage requests for the disclosure of medical records.

62. Under a recently introduced measure, victims of trafficking in persons could be referred for assistance not only by the police, but also by various government agencies and NGOs, which was intended to encourage victims to come forward. Although the authorities were considering expanding Rosa's Place, the accommodation facility for trafficking victims, the International Protection Accommodation Service had robust procedures in place to safeguard victims and ensure their access to services. In addition, the Government funded a number of specialized NGOs to provide trauma-informed support to victims.

63. The sale of sex had been decriminalized in Ireland, and a review of that legislation had found that, while efforts remained necessary to deter demand for prostitution, there was no indication that the so-called equality model, or Nordic model, should be changed.

64. **A representative of Ireland** said that the budget for the domestic, sexual and gender-based violence response had tripled since 2020, to €70 million, including multi-year commitments. Measures were being put in place to collect information on organizations that received the funding so as to have a snapshot of their services with the aim of identifying areas of intersectionality and capacity-building needs, as well as developing services.

65. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration had established the "Data as a Driver" group in 2023 to enhance the analytical capabilities and standards of criminal justice data, in part by developing shared and consistent definitions of sexual violence. Furthermore, partnerships and initiatives were being developed to provide an evidence-based and informed response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence that integrated the lived experience of survivors and challenged assumptions through rigorous data and analysis. Work had begun on a national prevalence survey and on the standardization of the data collected by government-supported services.

66. Lastly, the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency had also participated in activities at the international and European levels, including the European Institute for Gender Equality ad hoc task force under article 44 of Directive 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

67. **A representative of Ireland** said that the low rate of prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking in persons was due more to difficulties in gathering evidence than to judicial training. Often, victims of trafficking were unwilling or unable to provide the evidence needed to proceed to trial. However, An Garda Síochána, the national police service, had recently turned its attention to legislation on organized crime and the proceeds of crime, which had proved much more effective in tackling the organized crime gangs involved in trafficking, particularly for the purposes of sexual or labour exploitation. A number of

investigations were under way and the authorities were confident that they would lead to prosecutions within the year.

68. **Ms. Pia-Comella** said that she would welcome further explanations of the constitutional process required to ban conversion practices and of the protection measures for rape victims in the absence of a unified sexual violence law.

69. **Ms. Hacker** said that she wished to know whether the State Party planned to repeal the definition of illegitimate child, which led to legal discrimination against children of unmarried parents, who represented more than 40 per cent of children in the State Party. She also wished to know how the State Party planned to ensure that women and girls could press charges against individuals who spiked their drink or exploited a dire housing situation to sexually abuse them. She would appreciate information on any services provided to women victims of gender-based violence who were deprived of their liberty, while they were in prison and once released.

70. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she would welcome information on the collection of data on girl victims of trafficking in persons. She strongly encouraged the State Party to focus on training for the judiciary in the handling of trafficking cases because the lack of convictions was demoralizing to the police and had an adverse effect on investigations. She pointed out that the Nordic model approach to prostitution provided for the prosecution of clients.

71. **A representative of Ireland** said that legislation banning conversion practices did not require a constitutional amendment. The relevant bill would proceed through the regular legislative process.

72. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Irish Prison Service provided clinical support to prisoners who were victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and worked with perpetrators to prevent reoffending.

73. **A representative of Ireland** said that the spiking of drinks was already criminalized under section 12 of the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997. Legislation to criminalize the provision or advertisement of accommodation in return for sex was expected to be enacted in 2026.

74. She shared the Committee's concerns about child victims of trafficking. In 2024, 10 of the 67 identified victims of trafficking had been children. The Third National Action Plan to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking addressed the issue. The operational guidelines for the revised national referral mechanism would have a specific chapter on children.

75. With regard to the question raised concerning prosecution of perpetrators of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, there had been a concerted effort to provide training for all prosecutors since the establishment of a specific sexual offences unit within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Government was considering the introduction of fixed charge penalty notices that the police force could issue of the spot to those guilty of purchasing sex, as enforcement had been challenging. Prostitution had moved indoors in Ireland in recent years, which had made it difficult to obtain evidence. However, the intention was to allow mobile phone devices to be searched and explore other enforcement measures to increase the number of prosecutions.

76. **A representative of Ireland** said that the State of Children Act 1987 had abolished the legal concept of illegitimacy, ensuring that all children had equal legal rights regardless of their parents' marital status. With the exception of the widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's contributory or non-contributory pension and the widowed or surviving partner grant, there was no discrimination based on marital status with respect to access to social support. However, in 2024, the Supreme Court had found that those schemes were inconsistent with the Constitution, as they excluded claims of parents of dependent children from a pension category to which married people were entitled. In the light of the Supreme Court decision, the Government had introduced the Bereaved Partners Pension Bill, which would ensure that the unmarried parents bereaved of a partner had an equal entitlement to the aforementioned pensions.

Articles 7–9

77. **Ms. Al-Shukairi** said that the Committee acknowledged the efforts to promote gender equality in public life, including gender quotas and increased female representation in senior public administration. However, gender parity remained far from being achieved in decision-making positions. Women occupied only 21.4 per cent of ministerial roles and 25 per cent of parliamentary seats, below the European Union average. Representation in the judiciary was 33 per cent and in the defence and security forces 7.5 per cent. In the private sector, women accounted for 19 per cent of senior executives.

78. The lack of sex-disaggregated data in the foreign service limited effective oversight and accountability. Participation of Traveller, Roma and rural women in public decision-making was limited. She would welcome information on measures and funding to promote gender parity in leadership roles and the participation of women from marginalized communities. Updated sex-disaggregated data on women's representation within the diplomatic service would be appreciated.

79. The Committee welcomed the adoption of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 and the establishment of Coimisiún na Meán. However, it remained concerned about ongoing online harassment of women in political life, especially at the local level, and would appreciate information on the measures to address such harassment.

80. Lastly, she would like to know what steps were being taken to ensure that women and girls were included in decision-making processes related to climate action and disaster risk reduction.

81. **Ms. Hacker** said that the Committee had been informed that there were no formal statelessness determination procedures or an effective data collection system on stateless persons in Ireland. She wished to know what the State Party planned to do to remedy those deficiencies, in particular in relation to stateless women and girls. She would also appreciate information on the State Party's plans regarding the right to citizenship of babies born through surrogacy.

82. **A representative of Ireland** said that women currently represented 49 per cent of the senior management of the Department of Foreign Affairs, as compared to 35 per cent in 2017. Women currently represented 54 per cent of heads of mission, up from 29 per cent in 2017. In addition, women ambassadors were leading teams in key positions, including Washington, D.C., Tehran, Tel Aviv and elsewhere. In Brussels, at the Permanent Representation to the European Union, both the permanent representative and the deputy permanent representative were women. Although there was still work to be done, he believed that the Department was heading in the right direction.

83. **A representative of Ireland** said that the Coimisiún na Meán was at the heart of the country's emerging Online Safety Framework. Progress had been made with regard to the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech under the European Union Digital Services Act, with 12 signatories, including X, TikTok and Facebook. The Coimisiún, in collaboration with An Garda Síochána, had published guidance for candidates for elected office, which covered online harassment, abuse and threats to safety. The Online Safety Framework provided mechanisms by which political candidates could make complaints and follow up on those issues.

84. **A representative of Ireland** said that her delegation would submit information on the question about statelessness in writing. With regard to the question on guardianship in the context of surrogacy, as cases were currently pending before the courts, she could not comment in detail on the issues of parentage rights and nationality that they raised. The Government was working to provide pathways for families availing themselves of surrogacy to have their parentage recognized, while also protecting the rights of surrogates, preventing trafficking and protecting the identity rights of the children concerned.

85. **A representative of Ireland** said that the participation of Traveller and Roma women in public decision-making and leadership roles would be a very strong theme of the country's next national strategy for women and girls, which would include action plans developed through a participatory approach.

Articles 10–14

86. **Ms. Pia-Comella** said that the Committee noted with satisfaction the progress made towards incorporating gender equality in school curricula in the junior and senior cycles. However, she would like to know whether the State Party was considering introducing gender equality at the primary school level.

87. The Committee also noted with satisfaction the efforts to increase educational attainment among girls from linguistic and ethnic minority groups. She would like to know what measures were being taken to ensure equal access to education, including considering removing the past pupil criteria for admissions.

88. She wished to know what steps had been taken to ensure that teaching materials at all levels promoted values of gender equality and non-violence. She wondered whether the State Party was considering implementing uniform age-appropriate sex and reproductive education, including topics such as contraception, abortion, consent, sexual orientation and gender identity, beginning at the primary school level.

89. **Ms. Akizuki** said that the Committee welcomed the reduction of the gender pay gap to 9.6 per cent in 2022. However, it noted with concern that women constituted 60 per cent of all low-paid workers. She wished to know what concrete outcomes had resulted from the gender pay gap reporting introduced in 2022 and what enforcement mechanisms were in place to ensure private sector compliance with equal pay obligations; what specific measures had been taken to ensure full alignment with the European Union Pay Transparency Directive by 2026; and what policy and legislative measures had been implemented to address the barriers women faced in accessing decent work. The Committee further noted the extremely high unemployment rate among Traveller and Roma women. She would therefore like to know what targeted interventions were being implemented to reduce the unemployment rate and to expand social security and labour protection among those women.

90. The Committee also expressed concern over the gender pension gap, which remained at approximately 36 per cent. She wondered whether there were any plans to introduce a universal State pension system to address gender disparities in pension entitlements.

91. The Committee welcomed the increased investment in childcare services, the expansion of paid parental leave and the introduction of breastfeeding breaks. Nonetheless, it remained concerned that the unequal distribution of unpaid care work and the high cost of childcare continued to hinder women's full and equal participation in the labour market. She would welcome information on the measures and strategies in place to ensure access to affordable childcare in rural and underserved areas and to encourage greater uptake of parental leave by men. She wondered how the State Party was working to challenge traditional gender roles and promote women's labour force participation, including by alleviating their dual burden of paid and unpaid work. She wondered whether the State Party intended to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

92. She would be grateful if the State Party would elaborate on the underlying reasons for the high rate of withdrawn sexual harassment complaints. She wondered what measures were being taken to strengthen support for victims and ensure effective redress in cases of workplace sexual harassment.

93. **A representative of Ireland** said that the junior cycle reform of social, personal and health education for children between 12 and 14 years of age had recently been implemented. Training for teachers to deliver those courses was available online. A teacher training service organized professional learning events to keep teachers updated on the new curricula, which were devised on an age-appropriate basis, with different curriculum for the junior and senior cycles. The education framework for primary school students, the primary well-being specification, was also being updated and would be published shortly. He did not have details regarding what the specification would cover in terms of sexual education, but for children up to the age of 12 it would certainly be age-appropriate.

94. All schools must publish their admission policies online and a school could not turn down any person on the basis of race or gender under the Equal Status Act. Although schools

were required to have 25 per cent of places reserved for children or grandchildren of past pupils under the Act, additional pupils must be admitted if the reserved places were not filled.

95. **A representative of Ireland** said that the policy on early learning and childcare had been transformed since 2017, enhancing accessibility, affordability and quality. The “Together for Better” funding model launched in 2022 integrated four major elements: the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme, including the Access and Inclusion Model, the National Childcare Scheme, Core Funding and the Equal Start Model.

96. The Programme provided up to two years of free preschool education and had enrolled over 1 million children since 2010, with a 96 per cent uptake rate. In 2024, only 16 per cent of 4-year-olds had started primary school as junior infants, compared to 40 per cent in 2010.

97. The National Childcare Scheme, introduced in November 2019, provided means-tested subsidies to families with children between 24 weeks and 15 years of age. Since 2022, the universal subsidy had increased from 50 cents per child per hour to €2.14 per child per hour. The consumer price index has shown a drop of 38 per cent in early learning and childcare costs since the start of 2023, mostly based on the National Childcare Scheme. The budget for the Scheme was €529 million in 2025.

98. The Access and Inclusion Model, first introduced in 2016, provided every eligible child with access to the Early Childhood Care and Education. Targeted supports were available based on individual children’s needs and could include specialized equipment, appliances or minor building alterations for children with disabilities.

99. The Equal Start programme that had been rolled out in September 2024 was a targeted scheme with a budget of €17.1 million, providing targeted childcare supports for services and children in areas of identified disadvantage, particularly for Traveller children, Roma children, children experiencing homelessness and children in the international protection system.

100. **A representative of Ireland** said that gender pay gap reporting required employers not only to report their statistics but also to identify the drivers behind their gender pay gap and to outline steps to address it. The Government hoped that the aforementioned gender pay gap portal would help it to gather information from employers to establish best practices and guidelines, taking into account sectoral differences. Employees of companies that failed to publish their gender pay gap information could take a case to the Workplace Relations Commission. In addition, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission could enforce measures against persistent offenders.

101. Despite efforts to comply with the European Union Pay Transparency Directive, further measures were needed. The General Scheme of Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill included the transposition of article 5 of the Directive, which prohibited employers from asking job applicants about their pay history. However, the Bill was still pending, and no timeline for its adoption was available.

102. Paid Parents’ Leave and Benefit provided a non-transferable individual entitlement for each parent. As part of the First 5 strategy, which covered children under 5, the Government planned to develop guidelines to clarify various types of leave, such as parental leave and parents’ leave, to ensure parents understood their entitlements.

103. Regarding harassment and sexual harassment, restrictions on non-disclosure agreements had been introduced in late 2024. While not prohibited, those agreements must be used only at the victim’s request, ensuring victims were fully informed of their legal implications.

104. **A representative of Ireland** said that an expanded internship programme for the civil service had been introduced under the new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. The programme aimed to boost employment among Traveller and Roma and ensure that the civil service reflected the population’s diversity. Many departments represented in the delegation would be taking on Traveller and Roma interns.

105. **A representative of Ireland** said that, in addition to the civil service internship programme, there was the Irish Public Employment Service, Intreo, which offered personalized case management to job seekers, including international protection applicants

and marginalized groups like Travellers and Roma. Intreo provided free translation and interpretation services and helped address employment barriers, offering access to education, training and development opportunities.

106. The Government collaborated with a range of organizations and stakeholders at national and local levels, including NGOs representing minority and disadvantaged groups. The Irish Public Employment Service had introduced targeted initiatives for those with limited labour market access, such as the Traveller and Roma Employment Services Consultative Forum, which allowed community representatives to give feedback on employment services. Voluntary employment services were also available to older customers, and a community employment programme offered training and work experience for the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged individuals. There were also specific employment schemes for Travellers and Roma.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.