



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Briefing Paper

What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history with only two countries not having done so (Somalia and the United States). It is also the most complete statement of children's rights ever made and provides an internationally agreed framework of minimum standards necessary for the well-being of the child to which every child and young person under 18 is entitled.

What is Ireland's Role?

The Irish Government ratified the UNCRC in 1992, thereby agreeing to protect and promote the rights of children in Ireland.

Countries that ratify the convention (State Parties) agree to fully implement the provisions of the UNCRC. They also agree to submit progress reports after 2 years and then every 5 years to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ("the Committee"). As part of this reporting process, State parties also agree to attend hearings in front of the Committee to speak about their progress in implementing the Convention.

The Irish Government submitted its first report in 1996 and had its first hearing in front of the Committee in 1998. It submitted its second report in August 2005 and will appear before the Committee in September this year.

What is the Children's Rights Alliance Role?

Under Article 45 of the Convention, NGOs are invited to submit "shadow" reports on their own assessment of the Government's progress. In so doing, the Committee is given an objective, independent viewpoint on each States' compliance with the Convention. In Ireland, 80 organisations have worked together through the Children's Rights Alliance to do so.

The Children's Rights Alliance has been invited to present the findings of *From Rhetoric to Rights* to the Committee, next Wednesday 7th June in a closed session in Geneva.

What Happens When?

1996 - 1998	Irish Government submitted its first progress report to the UN Committee and attends hearing on this. The Children's Rights Alliance submitted its first shadow report <i>Small Voices: Vital Rights</i> in 1997 and presented the findings of that report to the UN Committee in 1998.
August 2005	Irish Government submitted its second progress report to the UN Committee.
March 2006	Children's Rights Alliance submitted its shadow report <i>From Rhetoric to Rights</i> to the UN Committee, as an independent evaluation of the Government's progress in implementing the UNCRC.
June 2006	Children's Rights Alliance will present the findings of that report to the UN Committee.
June- July 2006	The UN Committee will send a "List of Issues" to the Irish Government- a series of questions to which the Government is required to reply in writing.
September 2006	The Irish Government will have a "Plenary Hearing" in front of the UN Committee in which it must account for progress since 1998.

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of 80 non-governmental organisations working to secure the full implementation in Ireland of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

October 2006

The UN Committee will issue its "Concluding Observations" regarding areas that need to be further progressed.

What is the Role of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child?

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by its State Parties.

While the UN Committee cannot enforce the Convention, it can make findings and specific recommendations regarding actions to be taken to vindicate the rights of children. Its powers derive in large part from the desire of States Parties to avoid the negative publicity and political embarrassment at an international and national level in having been deemed, following a formal UN review, to be violating the basic human rights of children.

On Tuesday, 7th of June, the Children's Rights Alliance will be releasing the text of the presentation it will make to the UN Committee to the public.

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