

Children's Rights Alliance NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Irish Government proposes to delete reference to 'protection of children's rights' in draft European constitutional treaty

The Children's Rights Alliance today wrote to Minister for Children Brian Lenihan, TD expressing strong objection to the proposal by the Irish Government to delete references to "protection of children's rights" in the draft European constitutional treaty. The Alliance urged the Government to withdraw the proposal.

The amendment, proposed by Mr. Dick Roche, TD representing the Irish Government, would eliminate the words "protection of children's rights" from paragraph four of Article 3: The Union's Objectives and substitute broad language referencing the "universality and indivisibility of human rights". The effect of this proposal, if adopted, would be to continue to deny explicit reference and an explicit legal basis for children's rights in European treaties. As UNICEF Ireland has put it, "this will, therefore, perpetuate their invisibility in policies and law."

The amendment is scheduled to be debated and voted upon by the European Convention at its next Session which takes place tomorrow and Friday in Brussels.

The Alliance has asked the Minister whether the Irish Government is opposed to providing a legal basis for children's rights or does it merely believe that 'the protection of children's rights' is not important enough to warrant explicit recognition in legally binding, as distinct from aspirational, agreements?

"Ireland is a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child," said Raymond Dooley, Chief Executive of the Alliance. "It has adopted a ten-year plan of action, the National Children's Strategy, to advance the implementation of the Convention in Ireland. The amendment submitted by Mr. Roche is entirely inconsistent with these and other commitments made by the Irish Government to promote and protect the rights of children. We urge that it be immediately withdrawn."

The language explicitly recognising children's rights was included in the draft Articles circulated by the European Convention on 6 February. Incorporation of language explicitly recognising children's rights in European treaties has been a goal of children's rights campaigners for many years. The amendment proposed by Mr. Roche would strike that language and continue the practice of making children's rights invisible in European treaties

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of 72 Irish non-governmental organisations concerned with the rights and needs of children. The Alliance works to

secure the full implementation of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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