

1st June 2006

Press Release

Statutory Rape Gap Symptom of Wider Government Inaction

The Children's Rights Alliance today (1st June 2006) stated that the gap in legislation left by the Supreme Court decision on statutory rape is one, highly disturbing symptom of wider Government inaction on children.

Next week the Children's Rights Alliance will be appearing before the United Nations to present a comprehensive **report launched today**, *From Rhetoric to Rights*, and to give an overview of the progress made by the Irish Government since 1998 on implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child protection is one of five key issues that the Children's Rights Alliance will be highlighting in its presentation.

Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance said: "Why must the country be rocked by yet another huge sexual abuse scandal before the highest levels of Government pay attention to children's needs? Protecting children isn't a favour to be bestowed when we have the time. As a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government has officially acknowledged that children have a right to be protected, a right the Government must uphold. We will be bringing our concerns to the United Nations next week".

From Rhetoric to Rights is the most comprehensive analysis of Ireland's policy and practice regarding children since the Alliance's last report almost ten years ago. It has been produced following 18 months of consultation with a broad range of practitioners and advocates.

Jillian van Turnhout continued: "The Irish Government is failing children on many levels: in relation to child protection; the treatment of ethnic minority children; those with emotional, behavioural and mental health issues; and children living in poverty."

"However, the report does more than just criticise. It contains 87 detailed, constructive recommendations for Government action that we believe would make a big difference to children's lives."

The Children's Rights Alliance most pressing concern is the **status of children's rights in the Constitution**.

In addition to **child protection** other key areas highlighted in the report include:

- The treatment of **ethnic minority children**, including Travellers, separated children seeking asylum and Irish children who have been *de facto* deported with their migrant parents.
- Appropriate, multi-disciplinary social services for **children with emotional, behavioural and mental health issues**.
- Access for **children in poverty** to adequate housing, education, healthcare and income.

The Irish Government will be appearing before the UN Committee in September 2006 to account for its progress.

ENDS

Thursday 1 June 2006

Notes to Editor:

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 provision of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

From Rhetoric to Rights is available on www.childrensrights.ie. If you would like to receive a copy by email, please contact the Children's Rights Alliance at 01 662 9400.

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