

Children's Rights Alliance
PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGO

24th January 2005

All talk- no action- Referendum on children needed NOW

The Children's Rights Alliance today (24th January) called for immediate action on a Constitutional referendum on children's rights.

Welcoming today's report from the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance said,

"Constitutional change has been recommended in 1993, 1996, 1998 and 2006 by national bodies and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The time for talking is over. Irish society no longer believes, and has not believed for some time, that children should be seen and not heard."

Amending the Constitution is not a theoretical exercise. It would have three practical implications. First, it would provide the necessary legal basis for the child protection measures the Government keeps talking about. Second, it would end several "roadblocks" within the legal system that stand in the way of children having the best possible family life. Third, it would provide the necessary legal grounding for all children (not just those in difficulty) so that everyone will have access to such things as a good education, good healthcare and a safe place to play.

Ms. van Turnhout continued:

"For how long do we as a society need to be scandalised by the likes of *States of Fear*, the Kilkenny Incest Investigation, and the Ferns report before we do the right thing? Childhood does not stand still while adults argue for 13 years over the merit of changing the Constitution."

In 1996, the Report of the Constitutional Review Group indicated a need "to treat the best interests of the child as a paramount consideration in any actions relating to children." The Alliance believes that this is the minimum protection needed to ensure children's rights.

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For more information, contact:

Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive: 01-662 9400 / 087 2333 784
Maria Corbett, Deputy Chief Executive: 01-662 9400 / 087 7835 057

Notes to Editor:

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