



Coalition 2030

Submission on Ireland's 3rd Cycle Universal Periodic Review

24 March, 2021

1 Introduction

1.1 Coalition 2030 is an alliance of 75 civil society organisations and networks¹. These organisations come from the international development, environment, social inclusion/anti-poverty, trade union and academic sectors. We are committed to upholding Ireland's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at home in Ireland and in over 50 countries by 2030

1.2 Coalition 2030 welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Regarding the consultation process, we note with concern the limited approach undertaken by the Irish Government to date, the lack of civil society engagement and absence of Ministerial involvement. A single email by the Department calling for submissions without meetings, a dedicated webpage or information sessions or an outline of the Government's approach to the UPR, is inadequate and does not align with public participation obligations or Ireland's prioritisation of civil society space in its own UPR recommendations. This approach is in contrast with that undertaken for Ireland's second cycle review in 2016 which involved an Interdepartmental Committee coordinated by the Department of Justice and Equality, a dedicated website (upr.ie) and consultation events with civil society.

1.3 The promotion and protection of human rights is inextricably linked with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 affirms that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "seek to realise human rights of all" and pledges to "leave no one behind". The UN Human Rights Council has recognised that the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

1.4 The main message of this response is that the Sustainable Development Goals should be a guiding framework for Ireland's forthcoming UPR. At this stage, **we recommend in particular** that Ireland's UPR should:

- Provide information on current and planned policies relating to Ireland's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, given their relevance to the state's respect for, and adherence with, international human rights treaty obligations.
- Set out how the state is implementing a coordinated cross-government approach to SDG delivery and addresses the need for a new national plan with time-bound commitments and timelines, clear governance and monitoring arrangements, broad public consultation, and measures to ensure compliance with the SDG principles to reach the furthest behind first and ensure no one is left behind.

2 Ireland and Sustainable Development Goals implementation

2.1 Ireland's 2016 national UPR report (A/HRC/WG.6/25/IRL/1) highlighted Ireland's leadership role in co-facilitating negotiations which led to the Sustainable Developments (see para.166). Ireland's report correctly underlined that '*the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises the responsibility of all States to respect and protect human rights without discrimination*'. Kenya and the USA also noted Ireland's engagement in establishing the Sustainable Development Goals.

2.2 The 2016 review of Ireland by the Committee on the Rights of the Child based its recommendations on target 2 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.²

2.3 The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2017 in their review of Ireland's compliance called for the realization of gender equality "in accordance with the provisions of

¹ See <https://www.ireland2030.org/about-us> . Our membership is available [here](#).

² See CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4

the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The Committee also called for disaggregated data in order to track SDG progress.³

2.4 It is important that Ireland's addresses these recommendations and provides information both SDG policy developments since 2016 and outlines planned activities. **Ireland's UPR should address progress on the National Implementation Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals 2018-2020⁴** (2018 NIP) and Ireland's forthcoming new implementation plan (expected in 2021). It is particularly important that Ireland does not merely produce a limited update on implementation of certain policies and instead, actively outlines how it will overcome shortcomings in governance and accountability regarding SDG implementation. Coalition 2030 has previously addressed several weaknesses in Ireland's current approach⁵. We recommend that following shortcomings are resolved in the state's subsequent SDG implementation plan:

- The 2018 NIP includes actions to embed SDGs into domestic frameworks in a transparent fashion as well as the need for sectoral mainstreaming and integration of SDGs into departmental reporting. However, this has not been reflected in subsequent strategies and policies of Government Departments.
- Most of the 19 high-level actions detailed in the NIP do not provide detail on how Ireland will achieve its commitments under the SDGs. The Plan constitutes more a *framework* for implementation than an actual implementation *plan*.
- The 2018 NIP lacks tangible, time-bound targets based on Ireland's current situation together with a roadmap for how these targets will be achieved between now and 2030.
- The NIP does not address how vulnerable and marginalised groups will be targeted for prioritisation in order to ensure they are not left behind in development processes.
- Responsibility for leading the NIP rests solely with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and does not provide for strong political engagement from the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister).
- An associated issue is the lack of accountability mechanisms for progress under each of the Goals. It is important that robust systems for monitoring and accountability are put in place at the domestic level.
- It is important that frequent, high quality and fully disaggregated data is provided on all SDG indicators. This should include in-depth data on vulnerable groups and sectors that are not currently addressed by CSO statistics, and regularly updated data on environmental indicators. Supplementary indicators should be identified in consultation with civil society organisations.

2.5 Ireland's UPR should also address previous and proposed stakeholder engagement, including the continuation of the SDG Stakeholder Forum, which was progressed by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications in 2018 and 2019, as well as the introduction of 'SDG Champion' organisations in 2019.

2.6 It is also important that the State's Voluntary National Review **provides information on human rights compliance in voluntary reports to the UN High Level Political Forum on the implementation of the SDGs**. Ireland's 2018 voluntary national report mainly addresses human rights in the context of foreign and international development, as opposed to domestic action.⁶

2.7 Ireland should address education on environmental, social and economic issues. In particular, information should be provided implementation the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable

³ See CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/6-7

⁴ See <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7cde9f-the-sustainable-development-goals-national-implementation-plan-2018-/>

⁵ Coalition 2030, SDG Report, 2018. See [here](#).

⁶ See

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19382Ireland_Voluntary_National_Review_2018.pdf

Development in Ireland. With regard to knowledge of global challenges, **Ireland should also address** the preparation of a new Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy by Irish Aid.

3 Sustainable Development Goals, the UPR and Treaty Obligations

3.1 There is a considerable body of research which addresses the contribution of the SDGs, and associated targets, to the realization of human rights. For example, the SDGs which address poverty, social security, food security, health, education, housing, water and sanitation include many elements of the rights provided by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.⁷ **The UPR should be used to support the monitoring and review processes of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

3.2 UN treaty bodies have included the monitoring of the SDGs in their review of states parties' reports and made recommendations linking SDG implementation and ICESCR in concluding observations.⁸ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Right has also carried out analysis on the relationship between treaty obligations and the 2030 Agenda, including recommendations for states.⁹

3.3 **Ireland should utilise** the SDGs as a driver for accelerating human rights performance. Several SDG targets directly reflect elements of international human rights standards. Accordingly for its third reporting cycle, **Ireland should take the opportunity to ensure joint implementation of SDG commitments and human rights obligations.** An important part of this process is that the state's human rights reporting is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. In line with the UN OHCHR Universal Rights Index, Ireland should **structure its responses around the Sustainable Development Goals** and highlight which SDG sub-target(s) it is progressing when addressing previous country and Treaty body recommendations.¹⁰

4 Just Recovery from Covid-19

4.1 The unprecedented health, economic and social crisis impacts of Covid-19 are making the achievement of SDGs even more challenging. While the Covid crisis has seriously jeopardized progress on the SDGs, it also makes their achievement all the more urgent and necessary. It is imperative that Ireland pursues a just and transformative recovery from Covid-19 which integrates human rights protections and prioritises the cross-cutting SDG targets, and its associated monitoring framework, as the roadmap to increase resilience for the most vulnerable communities and workers across our society.¹¹ It is recommended that Ireland **sets out how both the forthcoming National Economic Plan¹² and the National Resilience and Recovery Plan¹³** will be assessed to ensure compliance with human rights obligations, includes information on how the Sustainable Development

⁷ Geneva Academy Economic, Social And Cultural Rights And Sustainable Development Goals May 2018

⁸ Geneva Academy, Academy briefing n°11, **No One Will Be Left Behind: The Role of UN Human Rights Mechanisms in Monitoring the SDGs that Seek to Realize Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, January 2018.

⁹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), **The pledge to leave no one behind: the ICESCR and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, Statement by the Committee on ESCR, 5 April 2019

¹⁰ See <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/>

¹¹ See joint civil society statement on "A Shared Vision for a Just Recovery". See

https://www.stopclimatechaos.ie/assets/files/pdf/a_shared_vision_for_a_just_recovery.pdf

¹² See <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/a62ce-government-invites-views-on-irelands-medium-term-economic-plan/>

¹³ See <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/6760e-public-consultation-on-irelands-national-recovery-and-resilience-plan/>

Goal framework has been integrated into their delivery, and ensures further public consultation and stakeholder engagement on these proposed Plans prior to their finalization¹⁴.

4.2 The COVID-19 pandemic is reversing progress made towards the SDGs both in Ireland and globally. Without proper assessment and consultation there is the risk that recovery measures fail to reach the most vulnerable and undermine human rights protections. Coalition 2030 has not had the opportunity to address these issues in detail. At this stage, we would underline that Ireland should address progress on several important Programme for Government commitments in its UPR¹⁵. These include Government commitments to:

- *Publish a new national Action Plan against Racism.*
- *Develop and implement a new Migrant Integration Strategy.*
- *Remove the Direct Provision System and act on interim recommendations from the Chair of the Expert Group to improve conditions for asylum seekers currently living in the system.*
- *Implement the National LGBTI+ and the LGBTI+ Youth Strategy,*
- *Implement a National Traveller Health Action Plan and review the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy*
- *Develop and implement a new National Strategy for Women and Girls.*
- *Respond to each recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly on gender equality.*
- *Expand the Equality Budgeting Programme across government departments and agencies.*
- *Expand and enhance the in-school speech and language pilots to improve the delivery of therapies in schools.*
- *Ensure that students with additional needs get the right assistance...*
- *Enshrine disability rights by finalising the legislation required following Ireland's recent ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities*
- *Implement a consultation and participation model, in line with the UNCRPD, to enable people with disabilities to participate in the policy development process.*
- *Ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD after the first reporting cycle.*
- *Ask the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection to review how children's rights and best interests can be protected in the context of the recognition of parentage, in cases of assisted human reproduction and surrogacy.*
- *Initiate a new Anti-poverty, Social Inclusion and Community Development Action Plan framed around the 17 UN SDGs...and reflecting a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on poverty and social inclusion.*

5 Policy Coherence and International Cooperation

5.1 In the 2020 OECD DAC review of Ireland's overseas development aid, the OECD recommended that Ireland should “develop mechanisms for analysing the impact of its domestic policies on developing countries, identify potential inconsistencies, discuss action to address these with all stakeholders, and ensure that progress is monitored.”¹⁶ Ex ante and ex post assessments are equally necessary to address potential policy inconsistencies and examine overseas impacts of expenditure decisions in accordance with SDG target 17.4. **Ireland should set out the procedures to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development**, including how the state is analysing domestic

¹⁴ See C2030 response: <https://www.ireland2030.org/s/20210222-Coalition-2030-Response-Consultation-on-National-Recovery-and-Resilience-Plan-Final.pdf>

¹⁵ See https://www.greenparty.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-06-15-ProgrammeforGovernment_Corrected-Final-Version.pdf

¹⁶ See <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Ireland-2020-Main-Findings-and-Recommendations.pdf>

policies with human rights obligations and the Sustainable Development Goals and taking corrective or mitigating action.

5.2 The obligation in Article 2 to deliver on ICESCR rights through international cooperation is also relevant to the abovementioned areas. Ireland's UPR should highlight how the state is taking forward the Programme for Government commitment to ensure that '*ensure that all Irish aid is spent in a way that is in full compliance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals*'. In this context, it is also important that it addresses how Ireland is working towards the 0.7% ODA UN target, including steps to ensure that climate finance allocations will increase, alongside increases in overall ODA.¹⁷

5.3 The Covid-19 pandemic is equally having significant social and economic impacts on developing countries. Ireland should provide additional resources to assist more vulnerable communities respond to the health crisis. It should build on its renowned international development and humanitarian experience and expertise of Irish NGOs to provide immediate relief to people and sectors most in need. Targets and indicators on international partnerships under SDG 17 are particularly relevant in this regard.

6 Business and Human Rights

6.1 The 2016 report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Ireland require companies to undertake assessments, consultations and full public disclosure of the environmental, health-related and human rights impacts of their business activities and their plans to address such impacts.

6.2 In its 2017 General Comment, the ICESCR Committee outlined that States should regulate relevant business entities across borders in order to protect communities from the negative impacts of their activities. The Committee noted that States should establish appropriate remedies, guaranteeing effective access to justice for victims of business-related human rights abuses when more than one country is involved.¹⁸ It is important in this regard that **Ireland's UPR addresses:**

- Ireland's Programme for Government commitment to review the implementation of the Business and Human Rights Action Plan, including the need for mandatory due diligence.
- Steps being taken to adopt domestic legislation requiring business entities to exercise human rights due diligence.¹⁹

7 Climate and Environment and the Right to Health

7.1 Coalition 2030 notes the accepted UPR recommendation of the Maldives "to take steps to move towards increased renewable energy production, in-line with their pledges on Climate Action". Ireland has failed to meet EU 2020 climate and energy targets with 2030 targets already at risk²⁰. **It is essential that Ireland address progress (and subsequent implementation) of amending legislation to the 2015 Climate Act²¹** and the delivery of relevant climate and energy commitments in the Programme for Government, including the production of a new climate action plan.²²

¹⁷ See https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/trocaire_budget_submission_2021.pdf

¹⁸ Committee on ESCR, General comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the ICESCR in the context of business activities, 10 August 2017

¹⁹ See <https://responsiblebusinessconduct.eu/wp/2020/04/30/european-commission-promises-mandatory-due-diligence-legislation-in-2021/>

²⁰ See <https://www.seai.ie/publications/2020-Renewable-Energy-in-Ireland-Report.pdf> ;

<https://greennews.ie/ccac-huge-efforts-needed-for-2030-targets/> ; and <https://ccpi.org/country/irl/>

²¹ See <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/984d2-climate-action-and-low-carbon-development-amendment-bill-2020/>

²² See <https://climateconversations.citizenspace.com/decc/climateactionplan2021/>

7.2 Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency in its comprehensive 'State of the Environment' report in 2020 highlighted that several environmental indicators are going in the wrong direction. It graded Ireland climate performance as "very poor" and raised concerns regarding pollution from solid fuel burning, transport emissions, as well as increasing methane and ammonia emissions due to agriculture growth. It also noted that Ireland's surface water resources are under severe pressure due to human activities. **Ireland should establish** a greater link between the environment and health, as recommended by the EPA, and respond to their recommendation for the development of a national environmental policy position.²³

7.3 In 2018 Ireland submitted a detailed response to the questionnaire of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment concerning 'Air Pollution and Human Rights'. This submission referenced (inter alia) the 1987 Air Pollution Act, Project Ireland 2040, the smoky coal ban in urban areas, the EPA's Air Quality Index for Health and the commitment to produce a National Clean Air Strategy.²⁴ **It is imperative that, having already prioritised and raised Ireland's response to air pollution in 2018, this information and the latest policy developments are equally covered in Ireland's UPR.** The following should be addressed:

- The current consultation on the development of a new Solid Fuel Regulation
- The updating the National Air Pollution Control Programme
- The extension of the smoky coal ban to all towns with populations over 10,000 people.
- The implementation of Department of Health's 'Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the health sector (2019 – 2024)'.
- The operations of the Climate Change Oversight Group for the health sector, led by the Department of Health.

²³ See <https://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/stateoftheenvironmentreport/>

²⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/Pollution/Ireland.pdf>