

Pledge by Ireland

Ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 28 September 1992

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 18 November 2002

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure on 24 September 2014



Pledges

1. Ireland is preparing to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the UNCRC.
2. Ireland is planning to launch a new cross-governmental project, “One House”, to provide wraparound support to victims of child sexual abuse
3. The publication of the Child Care Amendment Bill 2019 represents a significant step in implementing recent constitutional changes in Ireland which made children autonomous rights-holders and placed the best interests and voice of the child at the centre of all family law proceedings.
4. In August 2019, Ireland aligned itself with the *Voluntary Global Pledge: For every child, every right, organised by UNICEF*.
5. In November this year, the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) will be signing a Pledge to consult with young people on their views on climate change and ways to tackle it.
6. On 18 November this year, the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), will also be participating in World Children’s Day through the #KidsTakeOver initiative, where a young person shadows the Taoiseach for a day.
7. Ireland along with the Marshall Islands is co-leading the Youth Engagement and Public Mobilisation track of the United Nations Climate Action Summit which will take place on 23 September 2019. As part of that leadership role, Ireland has been engaged in developing a number of initiatives which place youth at the heart of efforts on climate action.

In light of the commitments we have made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as applicable, we have undertaken the following to highlight our commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of the child in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention:

- **What?**

1. Firstly, as part of our commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of the child and to mark the 30th anniversary of UNCRC, Ireland is preparing to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the UNCRC. It is envisaged that the ratification process will be formally initiated this autumn. As part of the ratification and implementation process, Ireland is planning to launch a new cross-governmental project, “One House”, this autumn to provide wraparound support to victims of child sexual abuse, modelled on the Swedish 'Barnahus' structure.

2. In addition, the Child Care Amendment Bill 2019, which has just been published, represents a significant step in implementing recent constitutional changes in Ireland which made children autonomous rights-holders and placed the best interests and voice of the child at the centre of all family law proceedings. When enacted, this piece of legislation will vindicate the right of the child to have their views considered in public child care proceedings in the spirit of Article 12 of the Convention. The proposed legislation signifies the State’s commitment to the promotion of the rights of the child in celebration of the 30th year anniversary of the Convention.

- **Why?**

1. While Ireland ratified the First Optional Protocol relating to children in armed conflict in November 2002, and the Third Optional Protocol in September 2014; the Second Optional Protocol has not been ratified to date. Ireland has been working to ensure that the necessary measures are in place to comply with the obligations of the Protocol before ratification takes place.

It has now been possible to move towards ratification due to the enactment of two key pieces of legislation (Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime Act) 2017 and Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017) that contain a wide range of provisions that enhance the protection of children and vulnerable persons from sexual abuse and exploitation and provide improved support to child victims.

2. Furthermore, as noted above, the Constitutional changes, in the spirit of Article 12 of the Convention, necessitated having a legislative framework in place to ensure that the views of the child are ascertained and given due weight in all family law court proceedings including child care proceedings in a consistent manner. A legislative amendment was therefore considered necessary to strengthen existing provisions.

- **How?**

1. In preparing for ratification, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has reviewed the relevant legislative and operational measures in close consultation with other relevant Department and Agencies. DCYA has made a submission to the Attorney General’s Office seeking approval to bring the Optional Protocol to Government for permission to ratify the Optional Protocol this autumn.

2. In addition, DCYA has prepared the Child Care Amendment Bill 2019 (following extensive consultation) that will ensure the views of the child in child care proceedings are adequately facilitated and given due consideration. DCYA has also commenced preparations for the establishment of a new national Guardian ad litem service within an executive office of the Department. The appointment of a guardian ad litem is the predominant way in which the views of the child are ascertained in child care proceedings and the setting up of the office aims to ensure the consistent provision of a high quality Guardian ad litem service to children across Ireland.

- **When?**

1. It is anticipated that Government approval will be sought this autumn to initiate the ratification process.
2. It is expected that the Child Care Amendment Bill will be examined by the Irish Parliament (Oireachtas) this autumn and will be enacted by the end of the year.

- **Who?**

1. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is leading on the ratification process of the Second Optional Protocol. Furthermore, DCYA has been collaborating with the Department of Health and Department of Justice and Equality in the aforementioned cross-governmental “One House” project that seeks to provide wraparound support to child sexual abuse victims.

2. In addition, DCYA has prepared the Child Care Amendment Bill 2019 and is also tasked with establishing the new Guardian ad Litem Executive Office.

We have made the following plans to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention: *(Please provide information, including dates and venues, on any events or activities planned by the State party to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention.)*

In August 2019, Ireland aligned itself with the *Voluntary Global Pledge: For every child, every right*, organised by UNICEF, to mark the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We aim to mark the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol and the future enactment of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019 with events that will also highlight the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC and the central role it plays in Government policy formation and legislative reform in Ireland. (Exact dates will be determined once the Optional Protocol is ratified and the Bill is enacted, respectively).

In November this year, Taoiseach will be signing a Pledge to consult with young people on their views on climate change and ways to tackle it. The initiative is organised in partnership with the Ombudsman for Children’s Office (OCO) and UNICEF.

On 18 November this year, the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), will also be participating in World Children’s Day through the #KidsTakeOver initiative, where a young person shadows the Taoiseach for a day. This initiative is also run in partnership with UNICEF.

Ireland along with the Marshall Islands is co-leading the Youth Engagement and Public Mobilisation track of the United Nations Climate Action Summit which will take place on 23 September 2019. Ireland is also working with Nigeria and Namibia as well as the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for the Climate Summit and the Office of the UN Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth on this project. As part of that leadership role, Ireland has been engaged in developing a number of initiatives which place youth at the heart of efforts on climate action, including:

- A global pledge which calls for governments to include youth in the development and implementation of their climate action plans;
- Ireland’s national broadcaster, RTÉ, in conjunction with Ireland’s parliament, Dáil Éireann, will televise a Youth Assembly for 10 – 17 year olds to discuss climate action on 15 November 2019. The Assembly will take place in the national parliament. Ireland is encouraging other UN member states to undertake similar initiatives as part of our work on the Climate Action Summit.
- Ireland has been working with a Non-Governmental Organisation called Kids Rights and their partner Facebook to launch an initiative called “State of Youth”. The State of Youth is a “for youth, by youth”

online platform that will aim to unite young people around the world to increase awareness, advocate, and take action on the most pressing issues the world faces today, including climate change.

- In partnership with the Marshall Islands and the UN Secretary General and his team, Ireland will organise a global Youth Climate Summit to take place at the United Nations in New York on Saturday 21 September. The event will be attended by over 500 young people from all over the world and Ireland was proud to contribute €100,000 towards the participation of young people from Least Developed Countries and young people on the front lines of climate change living on Small Islands in the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean.