

Annual full day discussion on the Rights of the Child 2014

Access to Justice for Children

Statement of Ireland

Thank you Mr. President.

Ireland would like to warmly thank the panellists for their presentations and valuable insights. Empowering and enabling children to access justice is fundamental to child protection and we welcome the practical focus of this afternoon's discussion, as a natural complement to the panel discussion this morning on the necessary elements of a child-sensitive justice system and mainstreaming children's access to justice in the UN system.

Ensuring access to justice is essential in order for children to realise and claim their rights and States should ensure an enabling environment for the voice of children to be heard. In November 2012, a referendum to amend the Constitution of Ireland to acknowledge and affirm the rights of children was passed. The submission to the people of an amendment to the Constitution was motivated by a desire to enshrine in the State's basic law that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration when making decisions about their lives and that the views of children are heard when making such decisions.

In order to ensure access to justice for children, the provision of adequate information about their rights and how to obtain remedies is vital. There is a need to find innovative, creative and accessible ways to ensure children can access and be aware of this information. Could the panellists give examples of best practices of the provision of such information to children, including on how to access legal representation?

15 March 2014