

**Universal Periodic Review-24<sup>th</sup> cycle**  
**Statement by Ireland on the review of Belgium**  
**20 January 2016**

Ireland welcomes the delegation of Belgium and thanks it for presentation of its report. We also commend Belgium for voluntary submission of a mid-term report on the implementation of recommendations from the first UPR cycle.

Although we note that Belgium possesses a number of penal measures relevant to corporal punishment, we regret that there is as yet no legislation prohibiting corporal punishment in all circumstances. Ireland encourages Belgium to enact specific legislation prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in all circumstances, including in the home and non-institutional childcare settings.

We note with regret that Belgium has not yet implemented the 16 recommendations accepted in the first UPR cycle regarding the creation of a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. While we recognise that Belgium possesses various bodies to monitor, promote and protect human rights, Ireland **recommends** that Belgium establish without further delay a national human rights institution complying with the Paris Principles.

Finally, we note the importance in all democratic societies of free and open debate, with full enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression in accordance with international human rights law. We note, in that regard, that even if rarely used, the criminalisation of defamation may have a chilling effect. Ireland **recommends** that Belgium decriminalise defamation and instead provide for it within the civil code, in accordance with international human rights standards.