

26th session of the Universal Periodic Review

(October 31 - November 9, 2016)

Review of Zimbabwe

Statement by Ireland

2 November 2016

Mr President,

Ireland thanks the delegation of Zimbabwe for its comprehensive presentation.

We welcome the steps taken to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights, including the adoption of the new Constitution that provides for a Declaration of Rights. We encourage the acceleration of the current process to align existing legislation with the Constitution.

Ireland is concerned by the high rate of child marriage in Zimbabwe and the devastating impact this practice has, not only on women and girls, but also on their families and communities in Zimbabwe. We welcome the Constitutional Court's ruling in January 2016 which declared the practice of child marriage to be unconstitutional.

Ireland **recommends** that all statutory and customary laws be amended, as soon as possible, to establish the minimum age of marriage at 18 years and that a comprehensive national plan of action be created and implemented to combat the practice of child marriage and its root causes.

Ireland notes with great concern the restrictions on the activities of civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

We **recommend** that the protections guaranteed by the Constitution be implemented, that a safe and enabling environment for civil society be created in law and practice and that the Government facilitate a visit by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders.

Thank you.