



Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Ireland***

1. The Committee considered the fourth periodic report of Ireland¹ at its 7th and 9th meetings,² held on 15 and 16 February 2024, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 29th meeting, held on 1 March 2024.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the fourth periodic report by the State party and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee expresses its appreciation for the open and constructive dialogue held with the multisectoral delegation of the State party and thanks the delegation for its oral replies and the supplementary information provided during the dialogue.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, administrative and policy measures adopted by the State party for the protection and progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the Gender Pay Gap Information Act, the Housing for All plan (2021–2030), the Pathways to Work strategy (2021–2025), the Roadmap for Social Inclusion (2020–2025), the National Development Plan (2021–2030), the National Plan on Business and Human Rights (2017–2020), the Migrant Integration Strategy (2017–2020) and Sláintecare (health-care policy), as well as the other measures mentioned in the present concluding observations.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations**Domestic application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

4. The Committee notes the information provided by the State party concerning the domestic application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and expresses appreciation for the reference to case law⁴ in which specific Covenant provisions have been applied. Nonetheless, in view of the State party's dualist regime, the Committee is concerned that, notwithstanding existing legislation providing for certain

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-fifth session (12 February–1 March 2024).

¹ [E/C.12/IRL/4](#).

² See [E/C.12/2024/SR.7](#) and [E/C.12/2024/SR.9](#).

³ [E/C.12/IRL/RQ/4](#).

⁴ Supreme Court of Ireland, *N.H.V. v. Minister for Justice and Equality*, Case Nos. 31 and 56/2016, Judgment, 30 May 2017.



elements of economic, social and cultural rights, the State party has not yet taken any steps to fully transpose the provisions of the Covenant into domestic law and has not indicated plans to do so.

5. Reiterating its previous recommendation,⁵ the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take all appropriate measures to give the Covenant full effect in its domestic legal order, with a view to ensuring that all Covenant provisions can be directly invoked before and applied by domestic courts;

(b) Redouble its efforts to acquaint lawyers, judges, magistrates and public prosecutors, as well as the general population, with the Covenant provisions and provide concrete information on the impact of measures taken in this regard in its next periodic report, including examples of case law invoking or applying Covenant provisions;

(c) Ensure that redress for violations of rights covered by the Covenant can be sought through the State party's varied recourse mechanisms, including through the provision of free legal aid services in areas of economic, social and cultural rights;

(d) Conduct an independent and comprehensive baseline study of the domestic framework that applies to economic, social and cultural rights, aimed at identifying areas where existing measures do not align with the provisions of the Covenant with a view to designing and adopting all measures necessary to facilitate the full transposition of the rights covered by the Covenant into the domestic legal order, and report to the Committee on the findings of that study in its next periodic report;

(e) Refer to the Committee's general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.

National human rights institution

6. The Committee is concerned that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is prevented from covering and applying the full range of rights covered by the Covenant when exercising its mandate, as the Covenant has not yet acquired the force of law in the domestic legal order of the State party and as a result of the limited scope of section 29 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act of 2014.

7. Reiterating its previous recommendation,⁶ the Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary, including reviewing the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act of 2014, to ensure that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission covers and applies all rights enshrined in the Covenant in exercising its functions and to ensure the adequate allocation of financial, human and technical resources to enable it to carry out its mandate effectively and independently.

Civic space

8. While noting a very dynamic and vibrant civil society in the State party, the Committee is concerned about reports indicating that civil society faces constraints in engaging in political advocacy in the context of the Charities Act of 2009 and in monitoring the implementation of projects, plans and policies on economic, social and cultural rights.

9. The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary, including within the framework of the charities (amendment) bill of 2023, to enable civil society and other relevant social partners to participate in political and advocacy work on economic, social and cultural rights. It also recommends that the State party develop meaningful and effective engagement mechanisms and strategies that go beyond information and consultation models to ensure participation by civil society in the

⁵ E/C.12/IRL/CO/3, para. 7.

⁶ Ibid., para. 9.

implementation and monitoring of policies, programmes and legislation related to rights covered by the Covenant.

Business and human rights

10. While recognizing the key commitments and priority actions listed in the National Plan on Business and Human Rights (2017–2020), the Committee notes with concern the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework requiring business entities to apply human rights due diligence throughout their operations, including overseas operations, and the lack of effective complaint and redress mechanisms to support victims of human rights violations and to deal with reprisals, in particular against human rights defenders.

11. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the second National Plan on Business and Human Rights, ensuring broad consultations with civil society organizations and social partners, and, in that context, consider the “Guidance on national action plans on business and human rights”⁷ of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises;**

(b) **Adopt a comprehensive regulatory framework on human rights due diligence, making it compulsory for business enterprises operating or domiciled in the State party’s jurisdiction and entities that they control, including those in their supply chains, to identify, prevent, mitigate and address abuses of economic, social and cultural rights in their domestic and overseas operations, giving priority to enterprises that are State-owned and those in which the State holds shares;**

(c) **Set up effective complaint and redress mechanisms and collect information on complaints filed by victims of abuses of economic, social and cultural rights committed by State-owned and private business enterprises operating or domiciled in the State party and entities that they control, including those in their supply chains;**

(d) **Refer to the Committee’s general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities, in particular with regard to the introduction of mandatory human rights due diligence.**

Climate change

12. The Committee is concerned that current emission-reduction policies may not be sufficient for the State party to meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement.

13. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Take all measures necessary to meet its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, in particular in the agricultural and land-use, land-use change and forestry sectors, by, inter alia, increasing taxation of emissions, and further improve the national adaptation plan to cover all relevant groups;**

(b) **Make every effort to replace fossil fuels in its energy mix, including by increasing renewable energy as an alternative;**

(c) **Be guided by and follow the Committee’s statement on climate change and the Covenant.⁸**

Maximum available resources

14. The Committee is concerned about the growing income disparities in the State party. It is also concerned about certain aspects of the State party’s fiscal policy, including the low ratio of tax revenues to gross domestic product and the fact that certain transfers do not reach the population segments that they were intended to benefit. While acknowledging efforts to address tax evasion and cross-border tax abuse, the Committee is also concerned about

⁷ Geneva, 2016.

⁸ [E/C.12/2018/1](#).

reports that financial secrecy legislation and permissive corporate tax rules continue to hinder the ability of the State party, as well as other States, to meet their obligation to mobilize the maximum available resources for the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Covenant. The Committee is further concerned about the persistently low budget level for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee regrets to note that it has received no information regarding the implementation of the Covenant in relation to negotiations with international organizations on fiscal consolidation policy and public debt (art. 2 (1)).

15. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Conduct a thorough assessment, with the participation of social stakeholders, of the effects of its fiscal policy on the economic, social and cultural rights of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups;

(b) Adopt a more efficient, progressive and socially just fiscal policy, ensuring the redistribution of the benefits of economic growth and maximizing the resources available to achieve the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights;

(c) Strengthen measures to combat illicit flows, cross-border tax evasion and tax fraud, in particular by wealthy individuals and business enterprises operating or domiciled in the State party's jurisdiction, including through the adoption and enforcement of mandatory due diligence mechanisms, in order to contribute to international efforts to that effect and to enable other countries to secure the resources necessary for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights;

(d) Take all measures necessary to avoid a situation that allows for shell companies to be used for profit-shifting, tax evasion and fraud by, inter alia, strengthening its legal framework and measures for the protection of whistle-blowers;

(e) Conduct an independent and comprehensive assessment of the impacts of its national and international tax policy on the economies of developing countries and report on the findings in its next periodic report;

(f) Increase the budget allocated to food programmes, social security, social housing, health care, education, employment services and other areas relating to rights covered by the Covenant;

(g) Redouble its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the obligations under the Covenant in the negotiation of international agreements pertaining to fiscal policy and public debt, taking into account the Committee's statement on public debt, austerity measures and the Covenant.⁹

Official development assistance

16. The Committee notes that the State party's official development assistance reached 0.64 per cent of gross national income in 2022, owing to the inclusion in the calculation of in-donor refugee costs. It is, however, concerned about information that the State party is not yet on track to meet the internationally agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance by 2030 (art. 2 (1)).

17. The Committee calls upon the State party to progressively increase its official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of gross national income and to pursue a human rights-based approach, including human rights impact assessments, in its development cooperation policy.

Data collection

18. The Committee notes the announcement of the development of a national equality data strategy. It is, however, concerned about reports that data disaggregated by prohibited grounds of discrimination are not systematically collected, which hinders the assessment of the progressive realization of the rights covered by the Covenant, in particular for disadvantaged individuals and groups (art. 2 (2)).

⁹ E/C.12/2016/1.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the national equality data strategy, ensuring the adequate allocation of financial, technical and human resources and setting up independent monitoring and oversight mechanisms for its effective implementation;**

(b) **Improve its data-collection system, including within the framework of the Equality Data Hub, by, inter alia, collecting data disaggregated by race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sex, age, language, religion, disability status, national origin, region (urban or rural) and other relevant criteria, with a view to formulating evidence-based public policies and designing special measures for individuals and groups that are disadvantaged in the exercise of their economic, social and cultural rights;**

(c) **Refer to the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹⁰**

Regional disparities

20. The Committee is concerned about reported regional disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular in remote and peripheral areas, despite the measures adopted. It is also concerned about the low and varying levels of the financial and administrative capacity of local governments and the lack of adequate coordination between national and local governments (art. 2 (2)).

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take all measures necessary to close gaps in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including in the framework of the National Development Plan (2021–2030), notably with regard to social and public services, employment opportunities, adequate housing and access to education and training, in particular in remote and peripheral areas, including the north-west region and border and coastal communities;**

(b) **Strengthen the financial and administrative capacity and enhance the human rights knowledge and capacity of local governments with a view to ensuring that people in the State party enjoy the rights covered by the Covenant on an equal basis, regardless of the region in which they live.**

Non-discrimination

22. Taking note of the comprehensive review process of the Equality Acts, the Committee remains concerned about the continued absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in the State party. It is also concerned about the prevalence of socioeconomic, racial and gender inequalities and social stigma and discrimination against disadvantaged and marginalized groups (art. 2 (2)).

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that:**

(i) **Includes explicit references to all prohibited grounds of discrimination, including socioeconomic status;**

(ii) **Includes definitions of direct, indirect, intersectional and multiple discrimination;**

(iii) **Establishes a prohibition against discrimination in both the public and the private spheres;**

(iv) **Establishes effective judicial and administrative mechanisms against discrimination, including by introducing provisions on reparation in discrimination cases;**

¹⁰ See [HRI/MC/2008/3](https://www.hri.org/docs/default-source/hri/2008/3/hri.mc.2008.3.pdf).

(b) **Take all measures necessary, including targeted special measures, to prevent and combat the persistent discrimination, racism and inequality faced by persons of African descent, Traveller and Roma communities, migrants, persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, in particular in the areas of decent work, social security, health care and services, adequate housing and education;**

(c) **Ensure that all equality strategies, policies and programmes to combat discrimination faced by disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups are developed in partnership with those individuals and groups and receive sufficient financial, human and technical resources, including through the effective application of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, and that their implementation is regularly monitored and evaluated by ensuring oversight by the relevant social partners;**

(d) **Refer to the Committee's general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.**

Equal rights of women and men

24. The Committee expresses concern over the persistence of gender role stereotypes and substantive inequality between women and men in the State party, as also noted by the Human Rights Committee,¹¹ impeding the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular by disadvantaged women. The Committee also expresses concern about the persistence of gender pay and pension gaps, due to vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market, and the overrepresentation of women in part-time and low-paid work (art. 3).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take all measures necessary by, inter alia, ensuring effective gender mainstreaming and budgeting in all policies and programmes, to promote the full access of women, in particular migrant, Traveller and Roma women, women of African descent, women with disabilities and bisexual, lesbian, intersex and transgender women, to employment opportunities, social security, adequate housing, health care and services and education on an equal footing with men;**

(b) **Redouble its efforts to close the gender pay and pension gaps, including by addressing the gender-based segregation in the labour market, reviewing its social and tax policies and addressing the factors that discourage women from continuing their careers or taking up full-time employment;**

(c) **Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the recommendations on gender equality of the Human Rights Committee.¹²**

Right to work

26. Despite an overall increase in the employment rate, the Committee is concerned that the most marginalized and disadvantaged persons and groups continue to be disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment in the State party (art. 6).

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Review its employment policies to address the root causes of unemployment, include in its action plan time-bound goals, focusing on young people, older persons, persons of African descent, migrants, Travellers and Roma and persons with disabilities, notably women belonging to one or more of those groups, and incorporate measures to overcome the structural and institutional barriers hindering**

¹¹ CCPR/C/IRL/CO/5, para. 21.

¹² Ibid., para. 22.

their access to the labour market, and be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work;

(b) Expedite the adoption of a time-bound Traveller and Roma training, employment and enterprise plan in partnership with Traveller and Roma communities, ensuring the adequate allocation of financial, human and technical resources for its implementation;

(c) Improve the levels of employment of persons with disabilities, including by establishing incentives and special measures;

(d) Safeguard the right to work of and facilitate access to the labour market for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers whose claims are being processed so as to protect them from abuse and situations of labour exploitation;

(e) Evaluate existing unemployment benefit schemes to assess their effectiveness in providing target groups with access to and retention in the labour market and in promoting hiring and job creation;

(f) Continue prioritizing high-quality technical and vocational training programmes tailored to labour market needs.

Minimum wage

28. While welcoming the announcement of the introduction of a national living wage by 2026, the Committee reiterates its concern that the minimum wage remains insufficient to ensure a decent living for workers and their families. It is also concerned that the Employment Equality Act provides for wage differentials on the basis of age and disability (art. 7).

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Take effective measures to ensure that the minimum wage is sufficient to enable workers and their families to enjoy a decent living by indexing it to the cost of living;

(b) Ensure full compliance among employers with the minimum wage;

(c) Take measures to ensure that the minimum wage applies to all workers, all sectors and all forms of employment, including by repealing sections 34 (6), which provides for age-related remuneration, and 35 (1), on different rates of remuneration for persons with disabilities, of the Employment Equality Act.

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

30. The Committee is concerned about reports of a large number of workers engaged in various forms of precarious work who are exposed to poor working conditions, including excessive hours, low wages and limited employment security. The Committee is also concerned about reports of the adverse effects of insufficient consultation with affected workers during deliberations on reasonable accommodation, which affects the right to just and favourable working conditions for persons with disabilities. The Committee is further concerned about reports of substandard working conditions affecting domestic workers and live-in carers (art. 7).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Take all measures necessary to limit the use of part-time work, precarious self-employment and "zero-hour contracts", in particular by creating decent employment opportunities that guarantee job security and adequate protection of workers' rights, and be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work;

(b) Ensure that the labour and social security rights of persons in precarious work, including part-time work, self-employment and "zero-hour contracts", are fully guaranteed in law and practice;

(c) **Take all measures necessary, including adopting legislation, to include the obligation for employers to consult with employees with disabilities when considering the provision of reasonable accommodation in the workplace;**

(d) **Adopt all measures necessary, including amending the Employment Equality Act, to ensure that all migrant workers, including domestic workers and live-in carers, enjoy equal rights with other workers as regards remuneration, protection against unfair dismissal, rest and leisure, limitation of working hours, social security, parental leave protection and joining trade unions;**

(e) **Strengthen the labour inspectorate by providing it with sufficient material, technical and human resources to monitor working conditions in all sectors effectively and impartially;**

(f) **Ensure that workers have access to effective mechanisms for reporting all forms of abuse and exploitation.**

Trade union rights

32. The Committee reiterates its concern about the obstacles with respect to the rights to collective bargaining posed by the requirement for collective bargaining licences (art. 8).¹³

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure respect for the trade union rights of all workers, in conformity with article 8 of the Covenant and with the provisions of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), of the International Labour Organization.**

Right to social security

34. The Committee is concerned about reports of the inadequacy of social security benefits, including unemployment benefits. The Committee is also concerned about the reported lack of administrative capacity of social security services to deliver targeted and individualized support to beneficiaries. The Committee is further concerned about certain conditions attached to social security benefits, including the habitual residence condition, which effectively denies access to certain disadvantaged groups and has a significant discriminatory effect on Traveller and Roma communities, victims of domestic violence, people experiencing homelessness and migrants (art. 9).

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take measures to establish a social protection floor that includes universal social guarantees and redouble its efforts to develop a social security system that guarantees universal coverage and provides sufficient benefits for all persons, guaranteeing that social security benefits, including unemployment benefits, are indexed to the cost of living;**

(b) **Streamline administrative procedures by, inter alia, allocating the human, technical and financial resources and training necessary to strengthen the administrative capacity of the social security services with a view to ensuring the coordination of measures and ensuring adequate, targeted and individualized support for beneficiaries;**

(c) **Review the conditions attached to social security benefits, including the habitual residence condition, with a view to removing the conditions that are discriminatory or have a discriminatory effect and take effective measures to improve the uptake rates of such benefits;**

(d) **Continue implementing the recommendations made by the Commission on Taxation and Welfare on social security reform;¹⁴**

¹³ E/C.12/IRL/CO/3, para. 19.

¹⁴ See <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7fbef-report-of-the-commission/>.

(e) **Refer to the Committee’s general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security and its statement entitled “Social protection floors: an essential element of the right to social security and of the sustainable development goals”.**¹⁵

Parental leave

36. While acknowledging the extension of statutory parental leave, the Committee regrets the lack of information on take-up rates. The Committee is concerned about reports of the inadequacy of parental leave benefits, the unequal sharing of leave between parents, the unintended discriminatory effects on single-parent families in the enjoyment of parental leave and the low uptake of parental leave among men. It is also concerned about the insufficiency and high costs of childcare services (art. 10).

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Review existing parental leave schemes with a view to ensuring equitable and adequate parental leave benefits, in terms of both length and payments, and ensuring that they apply equally for children in single-parent families;**

(b) **Increase its efforts to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of childcare services throughout the State party, including through increased public funding for early childhood care and education;**

(c) **Encourage men to use their right to paternity leave and paid parental leave in order to improve the equal sharing of responsibilities within the family and in society.**

Poverty

38. While acknowledging the efforts made by the State party to eradicate poverty and social exclusion, including through social transfers and the establishment of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office in the Department of the Taoiseach, the Committee remains concerned about the high rates of risk of poverty among certain parts of the population (art. 11).

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a multidimensional national action plan to eradicate poverty and to address both the root causes of poverty and the additional impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, ensuring the inclusion of clear and measurable targets, the allocation of adequate resources for its implementation and effective mechanisms for coordination among national and local governments;**

(b) **Ensure targeted support for groups who are disproportionately affected by poverty, in particular children, single-parent families, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, Travellers and Roma.**

Right to adequate housing

40. While noting the efforts made by the State party to address the housing crisis, the Committee is concerned about the persistent gap between housing supply and demand and the increasing cost of rental housing, which disproportionately affect those who are the most marginalized and disadvantaged. The Committee notes with concern that the lack of social housing has forced households to move into the private rental sector, which is not adequate in terms of affordability, habitability, accessibility or security of tenure. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of homelessness in the State party, in particular among marginalized and disadvantaged individuals and groups, the absence of comprehensive measures to protect tenants living in poverty and to prevent forced evictions, and the lack of culturally appropriate housing for Travellers and Roma (art. 11).

¹⁵ [E/C.12/2015/1](#).

41. **Recalling its previous recommendations,¹⁶ the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt all measures necessary to address the housing deficit by ensuring a sufficient supply of housing, in particular social housing units, in particular for the most disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, including middle- and low-income individuals and households, young people, migrants and persons with disabilities, and be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing;**

(b) **Take corrective measures to address inadequate housing, including substandard housing conditions and uninhabitable housing;**

(c) **Ensure adequate access to culturally appropriate accommodation for Traveller and Roma communities, including by increasing local authorities' culturally appropriate housing stock, as appropriate, and ensuring that steps are taken to avoid all forms of discrimination in the provision of accommodation;**

(d) **Ensure that evictions, when unavoidable and taken as measures of last resort, are carried out in accordance with due process of law, are preceded by consultation with the persons concerned and consideration of alternatives, are subject to appeal and result in adequate compensation or the provision of adequate alternative housing, and be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions.**

Right to food

42. Taking note of the establishment of the Food Poverty Working Group in 2021, the Committee remains concerned about the lack of updated data on the extent of food insecurity in the State party and of a framework law and a comprehensive, multidimensional policy on the right to food that would help to combat all forms of malnutrition (art. 11).

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a comprehensive national strategy for the protection and promotion of the right to adequate food, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, to effectively combat food insecurity, all forms of malnutrition, including obesity, and ill health linked to an unhealthy diet, setting clear, time-bound targets and establishing appropriate mechanisms to assess progress. The Committee refers the State party to its general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.**

Right to health

44. The Committee takes note of the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan (2021–2023) on removing private health care from public hospitals and abolishing the two-tier health system. Nonetheless, the Committee is concerned about the large disparities between different socioeconomic groups in access to health-care services. It is also concerned that persons without a registered residence often face restrictions in accessing basic health-care services. While noting the efforts made to reduce the backlog of medical appointments and surgical procedures, which was aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee is concerned about the remaining shortcomings in the health system, in particular low budgets, shortages of medical staff and obstacles preventing access to health services for the most marginalized and those living in remote areas (arts. 2 (2) and 12).

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Step up its efforts to ensure, in practice, a universal and comprehensive health-care system and allocate additional resources to increase the capacity of Sláintecare, recruit and train additional health-care personnel, reduce waiting times and reduce obstacles that prevent access to health care for the most disadvantaged**

¹⁶ E/C.12/IRL/CO/3, para. 27.

individuals and groups, paying particular attention to health-care infrastructure and services in remote and rural areas;

(b) **Expand the scope and coverage of and improve the quality of health-care services provided under Sláintecare, with a view to eliminating the socioeconomic disparities in access to health care and services;**

(c) **Ensure that access to primary health care is provided to all persons living in the country without discrimination;**

(d) **Ensure a whole-of-government response to effectively implementing the National Traveller Health Action Plan, ensuring an adequate allocation of financial, human and technical resources and the oversight of social stakeholders;**

(e) **Refer to the Committee's general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health.**

Sexual and reproductive health

46. The Committee notes the measures adopted with regard to voluntary termination of pregnancy and sexual and reproductive rights. It is, however, concerned about reports of the stigmatization and challenges faced by women and girls seeking to access safe and legal abortion in the State party. The Committee is also concerned about reports of disparities in rates of perinatal mortality and the lack of access to culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and information for women from minority groups and migrant women (art. 12).

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the draft bill on safe access zones in all relevant health services, with a view to preventing the stigmatization of and trauma among women and girls who are seeking an abortion;**

(b) **Ensure equal access to maternal health services for Traveller, Roma, migrant women and women from minority groups with the aim of reducing maternal and child mortality rates and, to that end, ensure the effective implementation of related laws and policies and reinforce access, in particular in rural areas, to sufficiently equipped facilities that provide antenatal, perinatal and postnatal care, taking into account the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal morbidity and mortality;¹⁷**

(c) **Take into consideration the Committee's general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health, as well as the 2022 abortion care guideline of the World Health Organization.**

Mental health

48. The Committee is concerned about the low budget allocated to mental health compared with total government health spending. It is also concerned about reports of problems with the availability, accessibility and quality of mental health care and services, in particular for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups (art. 12).

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to ensure that mental health care is available, accessible and provided in a timely fashion and guarantee the quality of professional mental health-care services, including community-based services, in particular for disadvantaged and marginalized groups and individuals.**

¹⁷ [A/HRC/21/22](#), [A/HRC/21/22/Corr.1](#) and [A/HRC/21/22/Corr.2](#).

Drug policy

50. While the Committee recognizes the services provided by the State party to reduce risks for persons who use drugs, it is concerned about the availability and effective accessibility of those services (art. 12).

51. The Committee recommends that the State party review its legal framework to ensure a human rights-based approach to drug use, ensuring that harm reduction programmes, health care and services, psychological support and rehabilitation for persons who use drugs or other substances are available and accessible, and eliminate obstacles that might limit access to them, in particular for persons who use drugs and belong to the most disadvantaged or marginalized groups.

Right to education

52. The Committee regrets the lack of statistical data on school enrolment, dropout and irregular attendance rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education and on educational achievement and results, disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic origin, national origin, disability status and socioeconomic status. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The significant increase in the number of special classes and schools for children with disabilities;

(b) The persistent obstacles faced by Roma children, Traveller children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds in gaining access to and remaining in the State's education system without discrimination;

(c) The persistence of significant inequalities in educational attainment, in particular for children belonging to ethnic, religious or other minorities and children from low-income families, which has the effect of limiting social mobility;

(d) The narrow approach towards the provision of sexual and reproductive health education (arts. 13 and 14).

53. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Collect and analyse data disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic origin, national origin, disability status and socioeconomic status on attendance and completion rates and educational outcomes to assess the enjoyment of the right to education by different groups and to take targeted measures to ensure their equal access to quality education;**

(b) **Prioritize inclusive education in early childhood education and mainstream schools for all children with disabilities by adapting curricula and training, assigning specialized teachers and professionals to integrated classes so that children with disabilities and learning difficulties receive individual support and due attention and ensuring reasonable accommodation within the school infrastructure and for transportation;**

(c) **Ensure that Roma children, Traveller children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality education that is culturally appropriate and adapted to their needs;**

(d) **Introduce targeted measures to raise educational attainment rates among children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from low-income families, with a view to promoting social mobility;**

(e) **Introduce comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education for both genders in primary and secondary curricula, including comprehensive sex education for adolescent girls and boys covering responsible sexual behaviours and focused on preventing early pregnancies, and ensure that sex education is scientifically objective and that its delivery by schools is closely monitored and evaluated;**

(f) **Refer to the Committee's general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.**

Cultural rights

54. The Committee welcomes the recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group and the inclusion of the Cant/Gammon language in the inventory of the cultural heritage of Ireland. However, it remains concerned about the lack of a comprehensive legal framework that safeguards Travellers' rights, in particular their cultural and linguistic rights (art. 15).

55. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation¹⁸ and requests the State party to include Travellers as an ethnic minority in anti-discrimination legislation and take all measures necessary to ensure the promotion, preservation, expression and dissemination of their cultural identity, language and historical legacy.**

D. Other recommendations

56. **The Committee encourages the State party to continue consultations on and expedite the ongoing analysis of the rights covered by the Covenant, as announced by the delegation, with a view to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.**

57. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

58. **The Committee also recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.¹⁹**

59. **The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national, regional and local levels, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that the Oireachtas plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State party to continue engaging with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.**

60. **In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (31 March 2026), information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (b) (business and human rights), 15 (e) (maximum available resources) and 29 (a) (minimum wage) above.**

¹⁸ E/C.12/IRL/CO/3, para. 33.

¹⁹ E/C.12/2019/1.

61. The Committee requests the State party to submit its fifth periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 March 2029, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words.
