

**For Written Answer on : 29/03/2023**  
**Question Number(s): 144 Question Reference(s): 15650/23**  
**Department: Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth**  
**Asked by: Claire Kerrane T.D.**

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### QUESTION

To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth with regard to the most recent United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child Report on Ireland, if he will advise what measures the State will implement to ensure the elimination of discrimination towards children of Catholic priests, as recommended by the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

### REPLY

On 24 and 25 January 2023, I led a delegation of officials from relevant government departments for the hearing before the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. I was pleased to discuss in detail Ireland's progress towards realising the rights of children and young people, and pleased to hear the views articulated by the Committee of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention.

In February, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published its Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Ireland, setting out its recommendations for Ireland across a range of thematic areas, and across all of Government. Among these Concluding Observations, it recommended strengthening measures to eliminate discrimination against Traveller and Roma children, children of African descent, children of minority faith or non-faith backgrounds, children in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations, LGBTI children, children without regular residence status, children of unmarried parents, and asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, and children of Catholic priests.

Officials in my Department have previously raised this issue with the Irish Episcopal Conference and the Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Care. The Conference have advised that the "Principles of responsibility regarding priests who father children while in ministry" produced by the Irish Episcopal Conference, still stand as the guidance for any of their members who finds himself in that situation. In order to ascertain the scope of the number of children that may be impacted by this issue, my Department has written to each male Catholic religious congregation in Ireland to ask that they advise if they aware of any current member who has declared himself the father of a dependent child/children. Replies are still coming in from the congregations, and the next steps will be informed by the responses received. To date, 17 responses have been received and no cases of children or young people currently under 18 have been identified.