

Universal Periodic Review – 22nd Session
Statement by Ireland on the review of Bulgaria

07 May 2015

Ireland welcomes the delegation of Bulgaria and thanks it for its national report and presentation today.

We welcome the positive actions on human rights taken since the first cycle, including voluntary submission of a mid-term review and active cooperation with the treaty bodies. Ireland also commends Bulgaria for its extension of a standing invitation to all Special Procedures as well as for facilitating and agreeing to visit requests.

Ireland further welcomes the publication in 2014 of a draft Gender Equality Bill and encourages Bulgaria to continue progress on this matter as expeditiously as possible. However, we agree with the concerns of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding domestic violence and marital rape. While we note with appreciation the comments made by the delegation today on intended reform in this area, we urge Bulgaria to amend its Criminal Code and Criminal Procedures Code to specifically criminalise domestic violence and marital rape.

Ireland is pleased to note that since its first review Bulgaria has become party to a number of international human rights instruments. Ireland **recommends** that Bulgaria sign and ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, without reservations.

Ireland attaches great importance to freedom of expression in and of itself, and as an enabling factor for a host of other rights. We share the concern expressed by UNESCO that defamation remains a criminal offence. Ireland **recommends** that Bulgaria decriminalise defamation and place it under the civil code in accordance with international human rights standards.