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**Women's Human Rights Alliance (Ireland)**  
**Oral Statement**  
**19<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**March 15<sup>th</sup> 2012**  
**Universal Periodic Review - Ireland**

Madame President,

The **Women's Human Rights Alliance** is an alliance of human rights organisations and individuals promoting the human rights of women in Ireland.

1. We welcome the Irish Governments' acceptance of a number of important recommendations from the UPR hearing in October 2011.

1.1 We are, however, greatly concerned by the rejection of six recommendations<sup>1</sup> on Ireland's restrictive regulation of abortion. These recommendations echo the criticisms made by three UN treaty bodies<sup>2</sup> and the recent call by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health for the decriminalization of abortion<sup>3</sup>. Their rejection casts serious doubt on Ireland's commitment to women's reproductive health rights.

2. We are gravely concerned that in accepting the Thai recommendation<sup>4</sup> for a statutory inquiry and compensation scheme for women and children victims of abuse, there is no mention of the women survivors of Ireland's Magdalen Laundries who have been denied

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/19/9 21 December 2011 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland; 108.4, 108.5, 108.6, 108.7, 108.8, 108.9

<sup>2</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) "Concluding Comments Ireland", CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/4-5 2005

United Nations Committee against Torture, 46<sup>th</sup> session 9 May – 3 June 2011 Concluding Observations : Ireland, CAT/C/IRL/CO/1, 17 June 2011

Human Rights Committee 93<sup>rd</sup> Session, July 2008: Concluding Observations to Ireland

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health (A/66/254) 24 October 2011

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/19/9 21 December 2011 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland; 107.40

reparation<sup>5</sup>.

2.1 We call on the Government to comply with the recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture<sup>6</sup> and Irish Human Rights Commission<sup>7</sup> to institute a statutory inquiry and compensation scheme for the Magdalene Laundries abuse.

3. We are concerned at the Irish Governments response<sup>8</sup> to Austria's recommendation for "full implementation and an independent assessment of **The National Women's Strategy**"<sup>9</sup>.

3.1 We acknowledge the current internal Government review<sup>10</sup>, but believe that an independent non governmental review would enhance the Strategy in the current economic crisis reflecting not just achievements, but identifying the measures required to protect and advance women's human rights.

4. We welcome Government's acceptance in principle of the terms of **The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**<sup>11</sup> and urge Government to sign the convention as recommended by Austria<sup>12</sup> and implement it as a matter of urgency.

5. France recommended a **gender parity** law to increase women's representation in politics<sup>13</sup>. We welcome the legislation on candidate quotas<sup>14</sup> but believe the quotas to be un-ambitious. The Constitutional Convention should be tasked with implementing gender sensitive reform of Irish political structures.

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<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/19/9/Add.1 6 March 2012 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland Addendum 107.40. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Committee against Torture Forty-sixth session 9 May-3 June 2011, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention, Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture CAT/C/IRL/CO/1

<sup>7</sup> Irish Human Rights Commission Assessment of the Human Rights Issues Arising in relation to the "Magdalen Laundries" November 2010  
[http://www.ihrc.ie/download/pdf/ihrc\\_assessment\\_of\\_the\\_human\\_rights\\_issues\\_arising\\_in\\_relation\\_to\\_the\\_magdalen\\_laundries\\_nov\\_2010.pdf](http://www.ihrc.ie/download/pdf/ihrc_assessment_of_the_human_rights_issues_arising_in_relation_to_the_magdalen_laundries_nov_2010.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/19/9/Add.1 6 March 2012 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland Addendum; 107.23. 31. 32.

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/19/9 21 December 2011 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland; 107.23

<sup>10</sup> A/HRC/19/9/Add.1 6 March 2012 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland Addendum; 107.23 32

<sup>11</sup> A/HRC/19/9/Add.1 6 March 2012 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland Addendum; 107.37. 48.

<sup>12</sup> A/HRC/19/9 21 December 2011 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland; 107.37

<sup>13</sup> A/HRC/19/9 21 December 2011 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland; 107.14

<sup>14</sup> A/HRC/19/9/Add.1 6 March 2012 Human Rights Council Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Ireland Addendum; 107.14 22.

Thank you

**This statement is supported by:**

- ✚ Irish Family Planning Association
- ✚ Women's Aid
- ✚ Banulacht
- ✚ National Women's Council of Ireland
- ✚ OPEN
- ✚ Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- ✚ Pavee Point
- ✚ Cáirde
- ✚ National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks
- ✚ Justice for Magdalenes
- ✚ AkiDWA
- ✚ Immigrant Council of Ireland
- ✚ National Traveller Women's Forum
- ✚ UN Women (Ireland)