Statement on the UPR Pre-session on Ireland
Geneva, 25 August 2026
Delivered by: Irish Coalition for Business and Human Rights

1. Presentation of the organisation

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

The Irish Coalition for Business and Human Rights (ICBHR) is a network of civil society organisations, trade unions and academic experts working to advance corporate responsibility and accountability for human rights abuses and environmental harm.

2. Corporate accountability and access to remedy

In Ireland's previous UPR, States recommended stronger safeguards against human rights abuses by Irish companies abroad, including in conflict areas. Ireland supported these recommendations.[1]

Ireland has repeatedly been called on to put in place a comprehensive framework to prevent corporate abuse of human rights and environmental harm, ensure corporate accountability, and provide access to remedy.[2]

UN human rights treaty bodies, including CESCR, CRC and CEDAW have raised consistent concerns regarding Ireland's approach to business and human rights, including the absence of a second National Action Plan and comprehensive mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation.[3]

In the previous UPR cycle, concerns were raised about serious human rights and environmental harms around the Cerrejón mine in Colombia, including the forced displacement of thousands of Indigenous Wayúu, Afro-Colombian and Campesino

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[1] UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ireland*, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/18, 2021, recommendations 157.76 (Islamic Republic of Iran) and 157.111 (State of Palestine), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956871?ln=en&v=pdf.

[2] Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *National Plan on Business and Human Rights: Baseline Assessment of Legislative and Regulatory Framework*, 2019, p. 52, baseline-study-business-and-human-rights.pdf, noting civil society calls for mandatory human rights due diligence during the development of Ireland's first National Plan; and Rachel Widdis, *Review of Access to Remedy in Ireland*, 2020, review-of-access-to-remedy-in-ireland.pdf.

[3] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding Observations on the Eighth Periodic Report of Ireland*, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/8, 2025, https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/document/1bc363e1-5382-417a-8d30-3df7fa8f3fb7; and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Ireland*, UN Doc. E/C.12/IRL/CO/4, 2024, tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FIRL%2FCO%2F4&Lang=en; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on the Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Ireland*, UN Doc. CRC/C/IRL/CO/5-6, 2023, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FIRL%2FCO%2F5-6&Lang=en.

populations and contamination of farmland and drinking water, involving Ireland's semi-State electricity company, ESB .[4]

Yet Ireland has still not established a comprehensive framework for corporate accountability and access to remedy, leaving communities affected by corporate human rights and environmental harms without adequate avenues for accountability and redress, while its first National Action Plan expired in 2020 and no second Plan has been adopted to date.

3. Deregulation of human rights and environmental protections

In Ireland's previous UPR, States recommended stronger human rights and environmental protection, including recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and safeguards in trade and investment policy.[5] Ireland supported the latter and noted the former. Yet the Government is now supporting a wider deregulatory agenda, framed as regulatory simplification, that prioritises competitiveness and economic interests over human rights, environmental and climate protections. This is reflected in Ireland's trade and investment policy, its push to ratify CETA, and its support for EU efforts to deregulate corporate obligations, including where this risks weakening social, environmental and human rights protections.[6]

This wider deregulatory agenda is already visible at EU level in the weakening of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive through Omnibus I, which narrows due diligence, limits value-chain coverage, weakens civil liability and removes the climate transition plan requirement.[7]

Ireland must not treat weakened European standards as a ceiling for human rights and environmental protection and climate action.

The risks of prioritising economic interests over environmental protection were highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, following her recent visit to Ireland. She warned that Ireland's environmental progress is at risk where economic and development priorities are pursued without adequate consideration of environmental and climate impacts.

Ireland has one of the highest concentrations of data centres in Europe. Data centres already consume over 20% of Ireland's electricity and are projected to consume more than all households by 2027.[8] The Special Rapporteur warned that their expansion places

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[4] Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Ireland and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, 2019, https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/IHREC_CERD_UN_Submission_Oct_19.pdf?.

[5] UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/49/18, recommendations 157.106 (Costa Rica) and 157.108 (Bahamas).

[6] Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, *Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026*, 2026, https://irish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/.

[7] The process has also raised concerns about corporate influence and weakened democratic standards in EU lawmaking, with the European Ombudswoman finding "maladministration" over failures in transparency, stakeholder consultation and established procedures. See, European Ombudsman, "Recommendation on the European Commission's Omnibus I proposal," https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/recommendation/en/215920.

[8] Central Statistics Office, *Data Centres Metered Electricity Consumption 2024*, 2025, https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-dcmec/datacentresmeteredelectricityconsumption2025/ ; and Climate Change Advisory Council, *Annual Review 2025: Electricity*, 2025, p. 16, https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/CCAC-AR2025-Electricity-FINAL.pdf.

significant demands on energy and water resources, potentially affecting communities' access to essential resources and Ireland's ability to meet its human rights and climate obligations.[9]

4. Civil society space, participation and corporate influence

In Ireland's previous UPR, States recommended eliminating barriers and restrictions against civil society engagement, including by amending legislation.[10]

Meaningful participation is essential to ensuring that decisions affecting human rights and the environment reflect the voices of those most affected and that Government decisions are subject to meaningful public scrutiny and accountability.

Yet Ireland fails to ensure meaningful civil society participation: it ranks fourth-lowest of 38 OECD countries for stakeholder engagement in developing primary laws, while 113 civil society organisations have warned of growing exclusion and disproportionate corporate influence in policymaking.[11]

5. Conclusion

We therefore urge States to recommend that Ireland:

1. Adopt and enforce, by July 2028, comprehensive mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation covering companies' full value chains, including overseas operations, with robust climate-transition requirements and effective civil liability and remedy.

2. Recognise in law the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; reject and reverse deregulatory measures that weaken human rights, environmental, climate or digital rights protections; and ensure infrastructure development remains consistent with human rights and climate obligations.

3. Strengthen transparency and meaningful participation in policymaking affecting human rights and the environment, including by establishing effective safeguards against undue corporate influence and ensuring that civil society, trade unions and affected communities can meaningfully influence policy decisions.

Thank you.

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[9] UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, *Visit to Ireland: End of Mission Statement*, 20 February 2026, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/ireland-should-mainstream-human-rights-protect-environmental-advances-un.

[10] UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/49/18, recommendation 157.128 (Azerbaijan).

[11] OECD, *OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2025*, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/04/oecd-regulatory-policy-outlook-2025_a754bf4c.html. Oireachtas, Working Group of Committee Cathaoirligh, Debate of 11 December 2025, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/working_group_of_committee_cathaoirligh/2025-12-11/2/.