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THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Oral statement by the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) on behalf of Pavee Point at the 19th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 6 – Consideration of UPR outcome on Ireland

Thank you Madame President,

IMADR on behalf of Pavee Point appreciate this opportunity to address you on some of our main concerns regarding Irish government's obligations in relation to the traveller community as part of the UPR process.

While we acknowledge the efforts of the Irish government to address the exclusion and racism experienced by travellers, we would like to highlight some of the steps to be taken.

To begin with, we are disappointed at the government's response to the question of recognising to what itself evident, that Irish Travellers constitute a distinct minority. This government and successive governments continue to ignore the opinions and recommendations of a range of eminent international and regional HR bodies who have said that travellers meet all of the legal criteria to be recognised as an ethnic minority, such as HR Commission, CERD, HR Committee, ECRI, FCPN.

Ireland must report back to the CERD in the next few months on what steps it has taken to recognise the Travellers Community. And Government must be cognisant of general recommendation No. 8 which is the principle to right to self-identify, if no objective justification can be put contrary.

In this regard, Irish government has not come up with any justifiable rational as to why travellers community should not be recognised as an ethnic minority.

The issue of traveller ethnicity fundamentally is about recognition and respect, and by extension inclusion. It is about recognition and respect for our history, our culture and our language. Let us be very clear about this, we travellers are incredibly proud to be Irish, and are willing and demanding to play our part of Irish nation.

While disappointed at the announcement here today, we see the glass as being a half full as the government indicators that the matter is given further consideration. We look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with the government on this very important issue.

The government says that the office for the promotion and migrant integration is to be the tool to record racist incidents and address racism. Unfortunately the limit of this office is that it does not include travellers. How the racism experienced by the travellers is addressed in Irish context?

2010 study on travellers health revealed the stark held inequalities experienced by travellers. Traveller mortality is 3.5 % higher than the general population. Traveller men live on average 15 years less than its settled counterpart and traveller women on average 11 years less than its settled counterpart. Traveller infant mortality is 4 times higher than the national average. Since this report was published in 2010 we have been campaigning for the National Action Plan to address these issues. Unfortunately we have not succeeded to date, we would urge the Irish government to engage with the traveller organisations and formulate a response to this report.

Thank you Madame President.

IMADR is an NGO in consultative status (Special) with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations