

Ireland Signs UN Disability Rights Convention

THE UN CONVENTION on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the UN's General Assembly in December 2006, has been signed by Ireland.

The convention sets out a universal, legally-binding standard to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities everywhere. Those drafting it intended to promote positive perceptions of disability and to recognise everyone's right to equality of opportunity.

The convention is the result of an unprecedented level of involvement by civil society groups. Rehab Group, which has consultative status with the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations, was actively engaged in this negotiation process. Rehab Group Chief Executive, Angela Kerins, has welcomed its adoption, saying, "This convention will guarantee human rights for people with disabilities in States which sign up to it, including in States where such rights have been denied to people with disabilities up to now. It is hoped that all States will agree to sign and ratify this convention, to ensure a global improvement in the full and equal enjoyment, by people with disabilities, of their rights. I hope that Ireland's prompt signature will show leadership to other nations and prove that this is a serious matter which requires nations to take steps to implement human rights for people

with disabilities on an equal basis with others."

Before the Irish Government ratifies the convention, a Government-appointed committee will decide which Government departments or state agencies are responsible in each area and will highlight any differences that exist between the rights enshrined in the convention and those rights currently enjoyed under Irish law by persons with disabilities. One important difference which has been identified is the law relating to capacity, and a new Bill is expected to be introduced on this in early 2008.

To date 117 States, including Ireland, have signed the convention, while only seven countries – Hungary, Jamaica, Panama, Croatia, India, Gabon and Cuba – have fully ratified it, undertaking to amend any legislation or regulations that discriminate against people with disabilities.

Upon ratification by the twentieth State, the convention will come into effect and its implementation will be monitored by a Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UN is also creating a Conference of State Parties to the convention. ■



**I hope that
Ireland's prompt
signature will
show leadership
to other nations**



About the Convention

The convention is the first human rights treaty adopted by the UN in the twenty-first century. It does not create new rights but ensures that all existing rights defined by the UN are made equally effective for persons with disabilities. The convention has adopted a wide definition of disability, describing it as an evolving concept which results from the interaction between a person's impairment and the obstacles and barriers that a person encounters because of society's attitude to disability.

Who to contact

For further information
please contact:



Sonya Felton

Public Affairs Manager
Rehab Group

(01) 205 7339
sonya.felton@rehab.ie