



Sent via email to: [minister.ryan@decc.gov.ie](mailto:minister.ryan@decc.gov.ie)

Dublin, 10 March 2023

Minister Eamon Ryan, TD.  
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)  
29-31 Adelaide Road, Dublin  
D02 X285

**RE: Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review**

Dear Minister Ryan,

I am writing following ongoing engagement by the Policy and Research Department in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission with your Department's UN Sustainable Development Goals Unit about Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review ('VNR').

The Commission is the A status National Human Rights Institution ('NHRI') and the National Equality Body for Ireland, established under the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014*. As we have been awarded A status under the UN Paris Principles, and are deemed fully compliant with the requirements in place, we must demonstrate the highest standards with regard to formal and functional independence. This includes independence in the context of our mandate, functions, use of resources, and international engagement. The Principles state that NHRIs shall have the function 'to contribute to the reports which States are required to submit to United Nations bodies...with due respect for their independence'.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the existence of independent NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles is a global indicator of progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.

We welcome the opportunity to engage in Ireland's VNR, and note DECC's invitation for us to contribute to the State's reporting process. Our participation in this process is based on

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<sup>1</sup> Principles relating to the status and functioning of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights (1993).



the following approach to ensure full protection of our independence, as discussed in a meeting with Department officials in March 2023:

- We will prepare a short VNR parallel report as a separate document with our organisational branding;
- Our report will not be circulated to Government Departments or any other stakeholders in advance of submission to the UN, or be the subject of any review or comments by DECC;
- Our report will not be included in any text or documents that go through a Government approval process;
- Our report will be included as an appendix to the State VNR report, and will be uploaded to the High Level Political Forum ('HLPF') review platform; and
- The Commission will consider our report at its 20 April Plenary and we will submit the final version to DECC following this date.

Given the absence of formal status for NHRIs in SDG monitoring and implementation structures, Ireland's leadership role in facilitating an independent NHRI parallel report to be considered at the HLPF is welcome and will be recognised globally as a good practice example. As recognised by the 2021 resolution by the UN General Assembly, NHRIs can act as a 'bridge' between the international and national human rights protection systems.<sup>2</sup>

Yours Sincerely,

Sinéad Gibney

Chief Commissioner

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly, [Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 2021](#) (2021).