

## Coalition of Traveller and Roma Organisations Ireland

### 91<sup>st</sup> SESSION: IRELAND

#### Oral Statement to the UN CEDAW Committee

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**Presented by Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum**

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Maria Joyce, speaking for a Coalition of Traveller and Roma organisations from Ireland.

As Traveller and Roma women and girls, we face layers of discrimination with lower life expectancies, poorer health, barriers accessing and poorer outcomes from education including early years and childcare, employment and basic services. Traveller and Roma women experience high levels of racism at individual and institutional levels including from the far right.

Since 2017, several targeted policies have emerged which seek to address Traveller and Roma inclusion. **For real impact for Traveller and Roma women and girls, the State needs to ensure the full and effective implementation of these targeted policies** in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations, as well as the meaningful inclusion of Traveller and Roma women within all mainstream policy responses, including the upcoming National Strategy for Women and Girls.

Traveller and Roma women bear the brunt of overcrowded accommodation, poor and unsafe living conditions. 39% of Travellers meet the EU definition of homelessness and almost half of Roma have been homeless in their lives, compared to 6% of the general population. **Travellers and Roma must be named as a priority group in the next National Housing Strategy.**



The slow progress on Traveller-specific accommodation, with over 20 years of unmet targets, is unacceptable. We urge the State to address this by **fully implementing national Traveller accommodation policy** and local Traveller accommodation programmes.

Traveller and Roma women are severely underrepresented in politics. We call on the Government to implement special measures, **including nested ethnic quotas** within gender quotas at national and local levels, to ensure our voices are heard and represented.

Travellers and Roma continue to face deep-rooted systemic racism within the Irish criminal justice system, with shocking levels of over-representation. Traveller women are less than 1% of the population, but account for 16% of women prisoners

Roma women face additional barriers in accessing basic social protections in Ireland (including Child Benefit) leading to extreme poverty and social exclusion. **The State must review its application of the Habitual Residence Condition** through an equality lens to ensure compliance with Ireland's human rights obligations and so that the most vulnerable children are assisted out of poverty, in line with UNCRC.

To effectively address racism and discrimination, the state must collect and use **disaggregated data by gender and ethnicity**. We urge the State to publish its National Equality Data Strategy, including immediate actions for introducing ethnic identifiers, underpinned by a human rights framework.

We thank the Committee for your time.