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1. Thank you Committee.

2. My comments relate to INAR’s recommendations on the system for international protection in Ireland and the system of reception for asylum seekers in Ireland known as ‘direct provision’.

3. INAR welcomes a number of positive changes since Ireland last reported to this Committee: Including, the introduction of a single procedure for determining protection needs; Ireland’s opt in to the EU Reception Directive; the increases in weekly allowances for asylum seekers; the partial improvements within aspects of communal accommodation for asylum seekers; and the reduction in length of time asylum seekers must remain within communal accommodation settings.

4. As of October 2019, there are just over 8,500 protection claims which Ireland must process to completion. INAR calls on the Committee to consider the poor availability of early legal advice for persons seeking international protection. This may act as barrier to the fulfilment of the right to asylum.

5. INAR expresses concern with the prolonged nature of determining whether a person has a protection need. The average process length from application to final decision of a protection claim may take up to two and a half years. It is also a matter of concern that in 2018, the appeals body on international protection
granted protection to 1 in every 3 decisions, overturning first instance rejections by the International Protection Office.

6. INAR calls on the Committee to recommend that Ireland opt-in to the EU Procedures Directive Recast and the EU Qualification Directive Recast. A properly functioning system for status determination must include a time limit on how long asylum seekers must wait for a decision on their case.

7. INAR expresses concerns that persons granted protection status, have a much reduced right to family reunification than had been the case prior to January 2017.

8. INAR expresses significant concern around Ireland’s system of reception for asylum seekers known as direct provision. INAR notes that asylum seekers are accommodated in communal centres, at times away and apart from local host communities. INAR echoes the calls of the former Special Rapporteur on Children and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on the need to move away from the system of direct provision.

9. The Irish government must begin planning for a reception system for asylum seekers that respects privacy, autonomy and does not segregate persons of minority ethnicities within communal accommodation centres.

10. INAR notes that over 1,500 persons in the asylum system are been accommodated in what is termed ‘emergency accommodation’, due to lack of capacity within direct provision centres. This ‘emergency’ situation can last for many months of individuals and families sharing exceptionally cramped living conditions in hotels and guesthouses.

11. Despite it being a domestic legal obligation upon Ireland to conduct vulnerability assessments within reception system, this has not operated effectively to date.
12. A single asylum seekers weekly payment is 19% of the weekly payment for a single person entitled to social assistance. The weekly allowance for asylum seekers must be increased to a level that reflects the high cost of living within Irish society.

13. Acknowledging that a right to work now exists for some asylum seekers after 9 months, INAR recommends that the time-limit for permitting asylum seekers access to the labour market be reduced to between three to six months.

14. As a matter of urgency, separated children who will age out during the assessment of their protection claim, should have the opportunity to remain with their foster carers OR to live independently with full aftercare supports provided.

15. I look forward to answering questions or providing clarifications on the system of international protection and direct provision, My colleague Nana will also be in a position to answer questions on direct provision.

END-CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY