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PRESS RELEASE

NI could do better on women's rights - UN CEDAW Committee

'The absence of a functioning government in Northern Ireland since January 2017 has led to gaps in legislation and policy to ensure the effective protection of women in Northern Ireland.'

These are the words of the UN's CEDAW Committee's (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) concluding observations after its examination last month of the UK Government's progress in implementing CEDAW, published yesterday.

The Equality Commission's Senior Policy Officer Roisin Mallon went to Geneva in February to brief the CEDAW Committee on the priority equality issues affecting women in Northern Ireland that the Commission recommended were addressed.

"We are pleased that the Committee took on board a number of our recommendations," Ms Mallon said. "In the context of Brexit, we welcome that the Committee has called on the UK Government to ensure there is no regression of women's equality rights and that its laws keep pace with EU progress on women's rights, as well as ensuring that the loss of EU funding does not lead to gaps in support for women.

"As regards our equality laws, the Committee regretted the failure to take any measures to ensure that women in Northern Ireland had at least the same equality protections as women in other parts of the UK. It recommended that legislation in Northern Ireland was revised so as to ensure that it afforded protection to women on an equal footing with women in other parts of the UK.

Roisin Mallon concludes: "We have gathered the evidence and listened to women in Northern Ireland and it's clear that these issues are important to them. These are important recommendations and it is vital that Government acts to address them, including the Committee's recommendations to ensure affordable and accessible childcare, particularly in Northern Ireland, as well as to ensure the effective participation of women in political and public life and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

"Further, the Committee was clear that, whilst it recognised the absence of a functioning government in Northern Ireland since 2017, the obligation was on the UK

Government 'to take all necessary measures to ensure the effective application of the Convention to guarantee the rights of all women therein'."

- [Download the Concluding Observations of the UN CEDAW Committee \(pdf\)](#)
- Read more about [CEDAW](#)

Notes

The recommendations of the CEDAW Committee include:

- Ensuring the availability of affordable and accessible childcare facilities and/or arrangements, especially in Northern Ireland.
- Taking targeted measures to improve the representation of women in political and public life, particularly in Northern Ireland.
- Ensure that the loss of funding from the European Union does not lead to gaps in support and services provided to women and girls, including by securing alternative sources of funding.
- Ensuring that pay gap reporting is brought into effect in Northern Ireland.
- Undertaking a comprehensive assessment on the impact of austerity measures on the rights of women, together with measures to mitigate negative consequences, 'without delay'.