

Remarks by Minister Roderic O’Gorman on the presentation of the 2020 Max van der Stoel to the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

19 November 2021

Dear Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Government of Ireland to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, for hosting this event today at the Peace Palace. I would also like to pay tribute to the Dutch government for the establishment and sponsorship of the Max van der Stoel award, which honours extraordinary and outstanding achievements aimed at improving the position of national minorities in the OSCE area. The award is a fitting tribute and memory of the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel.

The values embodied by this award – protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of minorities as a part of a comprehensive approach to security – are the values of the OSCE itself. Ireland strongly supports these values and the work of the High Commissioner. We wish to thank the Government of the Netherlands for continuing to work, through this award and in its support for the institutions of the OSCE, to advance these values and protect human rights throughout the OSCE area.

I am grateful for the opportunity to congratulate Pavee Point as the first Irish recipient of this award, who have been recognised for their continued efforts to strengthen the genuine integration of Ireland’s society by advocating for and protecting the rights of the Traveller and Roma communities. I would also like to thank barrister Brendan Gogarty for successfully nominating Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre for this award, as well as the expert jury of the Max van der Stoel award, chaired by former High Commissioner Lamberto Zannier, for coming to this unanimous decision.

Since 1985, Pavee Point has raised awareness of the fundamental rights of Ireland's Traveller, and more recently, Roma communities, groups who have long suffered from negative stereotypes and discrimination. Through celebrating the unique cultures, languages, traditions and shared experiences of these communities, Pavee Point helps to improve solidarity between Travellers and Roma, while also advancing understanding among wider Irish society. Furthermore, in their work to ensure full equality of opportunity for Travellers and Roma and to remove barriers to their full and equal role in Irish life, such as the in areas of health, education or employment, Pavee Point has contributed to making Ireland a more diverse and inclusive society. In this context, I would like to commend the longstanding dedication of Ms. Anastasia Crickley and Mr. Martin Collins, accepting this award today on behalf of Pavee Point, in promoting the rights of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland.

The Irish Government has sought to bring about meaningful change and progress for the Traveller and Roma communities through a strategic process, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, published in 2017. The Strategy encompasses actions on cultural identity, education, employment, health and accommodation. It is overseen by a monitoring committee, which I chair, which includes Government Departments and Agencies. The Committee also includes Pavee Point and other members of the Traveller and Roma communities, reflecting the process of collaboration between the Irish Government and civil society in advancing key rights.

Work is beginning across Government to develop a successor strategy and we will continue to work with Pavee Point during this process.

Ireland highly values its close cooperation with the High Commissioner on National Minorities, as well as with the heads of the OSCE's other autonomous institutions, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM). These institutions all work to realise the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security by ensuring respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law in the OSCE region. Ireland will continue to work on recommendations provided by the HCNM, ODIHR and RFOM, including with

regard to Traveller and Roma communities, to ensure a more inclusive, stable and secure environment for us all.