

**Statement by Fr Seamus O'Neill SPS, Society Leader, St Patrick's
Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers)**

St Patrick's Missionary Society accepts fully the findings of the review of our Society's policy, procedures and practice in safeguarding children conducted at our request by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). We apologise unreservedly to all those who have been abused by members of our Society and to their families. We have been making efforts to reach out in different ways to those who have been identified. We also invite others who may have been abused by members of our Society to come forward by contacting us directly or by contacting An Garda Síochána, the HSE or the Church's counselling service "Towards Healing" at Freephone 1800 303416 (Rep. of Ireland), Freephone 0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland and UK).

We are grateful to the NBSCCCI for accepting our invitation to review our procedures and practice of safeguarding children. It has been a very helpful experience for us. The report assures us that we have made significant progress in our efforts to establish good practice throughout our Society. It also points out some failures in our approach to safeguarding children, responding to victims and dealing appropriately with those who have committed crimes against children. The reviewers identify "the historical failure on the part of those in authority to react appropriately to the abuse admitted to by the members of the Society", but they also commend our Society for its current procedures and practice.

We have already fully implemented nine of the report's fourteen recommendations. The implementation of the remaining five is well advanced. We remain committed to attaining best practice in safeguarding children as soon as possible. We reaffirm our commitment to the Child Safeguarding Policy of the Society and to the policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland. We accept and cooperate with the "One Church" approach adopted in Ireland by the Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union.

St Patrick's Missionary Society is present in several countries in Europe, Africa, North and South America and the Caribbean and is committed to the same standards of child safeguarding in all these countries. We are committed to ensuring that our safeguarding structures in all the countries in which we work are sufficiently robust and monitored so that best practice is achieved. Many areas where our members work have little or no state or Church safeguarding structures and our safeguarding personnel in those areas are endeavouring to raise awareness in the wider community on safeguarding issues.

We are grateful to the NBSCCCI and to the many people who help our Society in the work of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. We acknowledge the courage of the victims who have come forward to report abuse to our Society and to the civil authorities. Nothing can undo the horrendous effects of the abuse they suffered at the hands of those who should have been their protectors. The members of our Society deeply regret this betrayal of trust. Our Society will continue to provide any practical help to victims that is within its capacity. Again, we apologise for the unspeakable abuse of innocent children and pledge to do our best to ensure that it never happens again.