



# 'I'm free, free to vote in Irish society and to travel wherever I like'

**RACHEL FLAHERTY**

Cheers of happiness and relief were heard as more than 3,000 people became Irish citizens at the Dublin Convention Centre yesterday.

The new citizens, from more than 100 countries across the globe, took part in the three ceremonies throughout the day.

Minister for Justice Alan

Shatter said the State was home to people from "every country on this planet".

The group gave an impromptu round of applause when Mr Shatter said the new citizens would have the same equal rights and respect as people born in Ireland.

Monaghan resident Melenga Nabiseselo said she was very happy to become an Irish citizen

with her family, as she clutched her certificate of naturalisation.

"This is amazing for me," she said. "It's a big change of life living here in Ireland. I'm living in peace and my children go to school - me as well."

Ms Nabiseselo said she arrived from the Democratic Republic of Congo in September 2009. Her husband, Abwe Mu-

londa, said people in Ireland had been kind and helpful since his family arrived. "The war has been destroying my country for a long time," he said. "I'm very proud to be part of Irish society. I'm free, free to vote in Irish society and to travel wherever I like."

Mr Mulonda said he had grown to love Irish food, especially Irish breakfasts.

His son Lmantha Mulonda (20) finished his Leaving Certificate last year and his dream is to play for the Republic of Ireland football team.

Newbridge couple Tomasz and Joanna Michalski, from Poland, said they were very happy to become Irish. Mr Michalski said they fell in love with Ireland through their work in the telecoms industry.

**■ Melenga Nabiseselo, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo and living in Monaghan town, after she became an Irish citizen yesterday at a ceremony in the Convention Centre Dublin.**

PHOTOGRAPH: CYRIL BYRNE

"We have more friends here than in Poland now."