

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

17 December 2009

PRESS RELEASE

Aid agencies deplore another broken promise on 0.7% target

Development NGOs call on Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee to promote legislation after Government shifts UN target date to 2015

In a meeting with the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee today, Irish aid agencies called on the Government to clarify when and how it will deliver on its international aid commitment.

Aid agencies raised questions about Government promises on the issue, after Minister of State Peter Power TD indicated that Ireland would renege on its promise to reach the target by 2012. Commenting on the aid cuts in the Budget, the Minister had said the target date would now be 2015.

Helen Keogh of WorldVision Ireland and Tom Arnold of Concern, representing Dóchas – the umbrella group of Irish development agencies – asked the Foreign Affairs Committee to promote legislation that would guarantee Ireland’s aid commitment.

“Twice we promised ‘solemnly’ to achieve the UN 0.7% target, and twice we have failed to achieve it by the date we set for ourselves. This shifting the goalposts to 2015 will cost poor countries hundreds of millions of euro in aid money that Ireland has promised but now won’t be delivering. This repeated breaking of our previous commitments raises serious questions about the credibility of this new promise on 2015,” said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas.

“At a minimum, to repair its reputation and restore credibility, the Government needs to announce practical steps, dates and spending increments to restore the aid programme, and to copperfasten its aid commitment in legislation.”

The Foreign Affairs Committee meeting also heard of a new and disturbing threat to the overseas aid budget, with suggestions that the Government wants to take from it to make up some of a new pledge for climate change adaptation. Committee chairman, Dr Michael Woods TD, undertook to inquire into the issue.

Committee members had raised the matter after media reports that the Irish Government wants to raid the aid budget for at least some of the €100 million of

Ireland's 'substantial new and additional funding' for an EU fast-track programme to help developing countries adapt to climate change.

"The Government has cut the aid budget massively and repeatedly this year. And it has also reneged for a second time on its promise to reach the 0.7% target. And now we hear that the Government is considering taking from the aid budget again, this time to keep Ireland's climate change commitments," commented Hans Zomer of Dóchas.

"Clearly, we cannot divert vital funds from programmes for essential services such as health and education to pay for our climate debt; this money needs to be new, and additional to our aid commitments" said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland's major aid agencies.

"It really is time for this Government to start taking both its overseas aid and climate change commitments seriously, and to stop making the world's poorest people pay for our troubles," Zomer continued.

ENDS

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Notes for the Editor:

- The 2009 budget for overseas aid was €696 million, down 24% (€224 million) from the previous year.
- The 2010 budget for overseas aid works out as €671 million.
- At the UN Millennium Review Summit in 2005, then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target of spending 0.7% of our GNP on overseas aid by 2012 at the latest.
- The Government set interim targets "against which our progress towards the target can be measured".
 - The interim **target set for 2010 was 0.6% of GNI.**

- The cut in the 2010 aid budget (€25million) means that **Ireland's aid effort works out at around 0.52%**, well short of the target set by the Government.

For further information, see www.dochas.ie

Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 44 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas Member Agencies

1. ActionAid Ireland
2. Action from Ireland
3. Africa Centre
4. Aidlink
5. Amnesty International-Irish Section
6. Bóthar
7. Camara
8. Centre for Global Education
9. ChildFund Ireland
10. Children in Crossfire
11. Christian Aid Ireland
12. Christian Blind Mission Ireland
13. Church Mission Society Ireland
14. Comhlámh
15. Concern Worldwide
16. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
17. Galway One World Centre
18. Gorta
19. International Service Ireland
20. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
21. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
22. Irish Council for International Students
23. Irish Family Planning Association
24. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
25. Irish Missionary Union
26. Irish Red Cross
27. Kerry Action for Development Education
28. National Youth Council of Ireland
29. Oxfam Ireland
30. Plan Ireland
31. Progressio Ireland
32. Self Help Africa
33. SightSavers International
34. Skillshare International Ireland
35. Suas Educational Development
36. The Hope Foundation
37. Trócaire
38. Vita
39. Voluntary Service International

40. Voluntary Service Overseas
41. Volunteer Missionary Movement
42. War on Want Northern Ireland
43. Wingspread International
44. World Vision Ireland