

MEDIA BRIEFING

16 June 2010

Taoiseach Brian Cowen to attend EU Summit on 17 June

Key Issues for EU Heads of State Meeting

On 17 June, Taoiseach Brian Cowen will attend the European Council meeting, which has a number of important issues on the agenda.

The European Council, chaired by President Herman Van Rompuy, will meet in Brussels on 17 June 2010, and is expected to adopt the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and growth, discuss preparations for the G-20 summit in Toronto, react to the Commission's communication on climate change, and discuss Europe's ambitions for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Another key issue on the agenda is the EU's preparations for the UN high-level plenary meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), taking place in September.

The EU is finalising its negotiation position for the Review of the Millennium Declaration, signed ten years ago by United Nations member states.

This historical and inspirational declaration was, in fact, a global deal by which rich and poor governments of the world agreed to unite in an unprecedented common effort to eliminate the scourge of poverty and hunger, work towards achieving gender equality, fight environmental degradation, and reverse the advancement of HIV/AIDS, while improving access to education, health care and clean water, all by 2015.

To translate these wide-ranging commitments into concrete targets and measurable results, the [eight Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#) were brought together as a common framework for action and shared vision on development, representing a global partnership based on the collective responsibility of all countries.

The Millennium Development Goals provided the first “recipe” to fight global poverty that was shared among all UN member states.

At the dawn of the new century, this unprecedented political consensus on what should be done and by whom, provided us all with a sense of purpose and renewed optimism: „We were the first generation that could put an end to poverty, and we refused to miss the opportunity!”

The world was on track to achieve at least the first MDG of halving the number of extreme poor; and was coming close in several others. Now, that hard fought progress is at risk.

Ten years after the Millennium Declaration was signed, the economic crisis, which originated within the world's major financial centres, has spread throughout the global economy. Developing countries, which are least responsible for the crisis, are bearing the brunt of its impact, and severe social, political, and economic dislocation and a rise in social conflict and distress are only emphasised by natural disasters such as the recent earthquake that brought Haiti and its people to their knees.

With just five years left to 2015, the UN has called a High-Level meeting to assess progress made towards achieving the MDGs, and to remind member states of their commitments.

From 20-22 September 2010, Heads of State will meet again at the United Nations headquarters to review the successes, to learn from the failures, and to discuss the launch of detailed plans on how to ensure the attainment of the MDGs by 2015. This Summit will be a defining opportunity to galvanise new political commitment, spur the collective action and efforts needed to meet the MDGs by the 2015.

The MDGs *can* be achieved. But we need to act *now*.

Many countries have achieved major successes in combating extreme hunger and poverty. Since the Millennium Summit in 2000, poor countries have invested in the policies and mechanisms that are required, and rich countries have increased the amounts of money they are making available for overseas aid.

But as recent reports from [the United Nations](#) and [the European Union](#) show, the world needs to boost progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

In its recent submission, [Dóchas has outlined what action is needed now](#) to ensure we achieve the Goal of ending extreme poverty.

As part of the Millennium Goal agreement, Ireland has promised to make resources available for poor countries' development strategies: More and Better Aid, and Trade Reform.

In September, Ireland will have to inform the members of the United Nations about its contributions to the MDGs. The Government is currently drafting its report on its track record, but it is clear that it is falling behind on its commitments on aid and trade. (see notes below)

Dóchas believes that it is vital that Ireland, in its own right but also as a member of the European Union, adopts an ambitious position ahead of the High Level Meeting. Such an action plan would need to include monitoring mechanisms on countries' contributions to the MDGs, and clear interim targets for all commitments.

NOTES

1. Key documents:
 - UN: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/665
 - EU: http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/EU_Action_Plan_MDG.PDF
 - Dóchas: http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Dochas_MDG_paper_April2010.pdf
2. The UN report, “Keeping the promise: Forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the MDGs by 2015”, is available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/665
3. In September 2000, world leaders agreed a set of goals for the international community, to bring about a world in which sustaining development and eliminating poverty would have the highest priority. These goals were based on agreements and resolutions of world conferences organised by the United Nations in the 1990s. The goals are commonly accepted as a framework for measuring "development" progress, and are called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): see <http://www.dochas.ie/pages/resources/default.aspx?id=34>
4. As part of its contribution to the achievement of the MDGs, Ireland promised to increase its overseas aid budget, so that we would reach the UN target of spending 0.7% of national income on Official Development Assistance. The date for the achievement of this target has shifted twice: In 2000, then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern set a date of 2007, which was later revised to 2012. In December 2009, the Government announced the date would be moved to “2015 at the latest”, but to date, the Government has not published a time-table or strategy for the achievement of this latest target date.

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“The Millennium Declaration represents the most important collective promise ever made to the world’s most vulnerable people. This promise is not based on pity or charity, but on solidarity, justice and the recognition that we are increasingly dependent on one another for our shared prosperity and security.”

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General, March 2010