

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS RELEASE

1 June 2010

Aid Agencies write to Minister Martin ahead of EU Council

**“Investing in international cooperation is essential for Ireland,”
say aid agencies**

45 Irish Development NGOs have written to Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin to urge him to ensure EU member states take determined action to bring the international efforts to eradicate extreme poverty back on track.

Minister Martin will attend the 14 June meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers which will determine Europe’s negotiation position for the United Nations (UN) Summit to review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September.

In their letter, Ireland’s overseas aid agencies state that Ireland has a crucial role to play in this Review process, in its own right and as part of the world’s largest trading block, the EU. They call on the Minister to ensure the EU delivers on its commitments, before the UN Summit, and that the EU adopts an “MDG rescue plan” that is concrete, action-oriented, and that includes monitoring mechanisms.

“As a small, open economy, Ireland depends on its global reputation as a reliable partner and as a country that keeps its promises. This year is our opportunity to cement that reputation. But that requires that our Government engages in international meetings not on promises made, but on promises delivered” said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella organisation of 45 of Ireland’s overseas aid agencies.

“Ireland’s overseas aid programme is world class and has been shown to make real – and long-lasting – differences in the lives of the world’s poorest people. Yet our aid has not reached the levels we promised, and we have not delivered on the reform of the unfair trade rules that keep poor people locked in poverty”, continued Zomer.

In February 2010, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon published an assessment of progress towards the MDGs. In his report, he outlined that enormous progress has been made, but that rich and poor countries alike need to accelerate this progress, and intensify their efforts.

The letter states that:

“For Ireland, this means delivering on our new commitment to spending, by 2015 at the latest, 0.7% of national income on official development assistance (ODA), and taking tangible steps to improve “policy coherence for development” – ensuring that other policy areas with external implications – in particular trade, finance, agriculture, environment,

migration, and security – do not negatively affect developing countries and impede the impact of development aid.”

In September this year, world leaders will again meet at the United Nations, to review the successes, learn from the failures and to adopt detailed action plans to ensure the attainment of the Millennium Goals. Ireland is set to be represented at the Summit by the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen TD.

“Ten years ago, world leaders met at the United Nations to sign a historic deal to make the worst forms of global poverty history before the year 2015. As part of the deal, poor countries agreed a set of actions to put an end to poverty, and rich countries agreed to support them by reforming world trade and help raise the funds for this new global strategy” said Hans Zomer.

“Now, the world is at risk of failing in this historic venture. While enormous progress has been made on the eight targets since 2000, the failure by rich countries to honour their aid and trade promises has raised serious question marks about the achievement of those MDGs” added Zomer.

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NOTES

- The full text of the letter is available on the Dóchas website, at:
http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Letter_to_Michael_Martin_ahead_of_EU_meeting.pdf
- Dóchas has published a position paper, *Supporting Accelerated Progress on the Millennium Development Goals*, which is available at
http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Dochas_MDG_paper_April2010.pdf
- Ireland has made a number of commitments and promises to increase its overseas aid:
 - First Irish promise: in the 1970s, Ireland signed up to a UN call to spend 0.7% of its GNI on Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the end of the decade.
 - Second promise: In 2000, then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target for spending 0.7% of our GNI on ODA – or overseas aid – by 2007.
 - Third promise: At the UN Millennium Review Summit in 2005, former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target for spending 0.7% of our GNP on overseas aid by 2012 at the latest.
- The 2010 government Budget for overseas aid works out as €671 million.

- In 2006, the Government launched its White Paper on Irish Aid. At the launch event, then Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern TD, declared that development cooperation would be a “central plank” of Ireland’s foreign policy, and that “a commitment to the United Nations will be at the heart of this new phase” of Ireland’s foreign policy. He stated: “We see Ireland as the model UN Member State, reaching the 0.7% GNP target, playing our part in peacekeeping operations, developing an international role in conflict resolution and unleashing the skills and potentials of ordinary Irish people to assist the developing world.”
See <http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/whitepaper/>
- At the start of 2010, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon published his assessment of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The full text of his report “Keeping The Promise” is available on the UN website, and via Dóchas: http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Keeping_the_promise.pdf
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals which the UN set out to achieve by 2015. They were adopted by 189 nations, including Ireland, during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. The eight goals are to:
 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 2. Achieve universal primary education
 3. Promote gender equality and empower women
 4. Reduce child mortality
 5. Improve maternal health
 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 7. Ensure environmental sustainability
 8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 45 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas Member Agencies

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| 1. A-Z Children’s Charity | 17. Friends of Londiani (Ireland) |
| 2. ActionAid Ireland | 18. Galway One World Centre |
| 3. Afri | 19. Gorta |
| 4. Africa Centre | 20. Habitat for Humanity Ireland |
| 5. Aidlink | 21. International Service Ireland |
| 6. Amnesty International Ireland | 22. Irish League of Credit Unions International Development Foundation (ILCU/IDF) |
| 7. Bóthar | 23. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs (ICJSA) |
| 8. Camara Education | 24. Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) |
| 9. Centre for Global Education | 25. Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) |
| 10. ChildFund Ireland | 26. Irish Foundation for Co-operative Development (IFCD) |
| 11. Children in Crossfire | 27. Irish Missionary Union (IMU) |
| 12. Christian Aid Ireland | 28. Irish Red Cross (IRC) |
| 13. Christian Blind Mission Ireland | 29. Kerry Action for Development Education (KADE) |
| 14. Church Missionary Society Ireland (CMSI) | |
| 15. Comhlámh | |
| 16. Concern | |

30. National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
31. Oxfam – Ireland
32. Plan Ireland
33. Progressio Ireland
34. Self Help Africa
35. Sightsavers International Ireland
36. Skillshare International Ireland
37. Suas Educational Development
38. The Hope Foundation
39. Trócaire
40. Vita
41. Voluntary Service International (VSI)
42. Voluntary Service Overseas (Ireland)
43. Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM)
44. War on Want Northern Ireland
45. World Vision Ireland