

PRESS STATEMENT

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Aid Donors Must Seize Chance To Improve Aid

**Donor meeting is an opportunity to go beyond technocratic approaches,
and enhance aid impact**

In the first week of September, more than 1,200 representatives of overseas aid donors, developing country governments and NGOs will gather in Accra, Ghana, for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness organised by the OECD.

The event will focus on reviewing rich countries' performance in relation to a five-year plan for reform of aid practices.

"From the perspective of the Irish aid agencies, this interest in aid effectiveness is very welcome; in theory, donor governments have put in place the principles for more efficient aid. But the real test of the effectiveness of aid is its development impact: real changes in the lives and rights of millions of people affected by poverty and inequality", said Hans Zomer, of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland's Development NGOs.

The member organisations of Dóchas said that many Civil Society Organisations, including in the developing world, question what appears to be a narrow and limited focus by donors on efficiency ahead of broader impact, or 'development effectiveness'.

"Since 2005, when governments produced the Paris Declaration, which set out the principles to which they aspire, donor governments have made little progress in making aid more effective by 2008. That is what the OECD's own monitoring survey has found. Too much aid remains driven by donors' priorities and interests, which can undermine good governance in recipient countries and sideline the needs of the poor", said Éamonn Casey, Policy Officer for Dóchas.

Aid agencies say that experiences on the ground raise questions as to whether much has actually changed in aid practice. They point to weak commitments to untie aid from donor interests, and to an inordinate amount of policy conditions attached to aid given to developing countries. They also say that donors are making limited use of developing countries' own systems to deliver that aid, even though they acknowledge that would enhance the aid's long-term sustainability.

"NGOs are advocating in Accra that donors should agree on a deeper and more far-reaching reform of aid. The fundamental challenge of the Accra forum is for donors to spell out how they plan to make tangible, measurable progress not just on aid efficiency or donor harmonisation, but on meaningful aid reforms to deliver real development effectiveness", according to Casey, who is following preparations for the Accra meetings closely.

This High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra from 2 to 4 September is a chance to put the Paris Declaration process back on track by 2010 - and to go further towards a model of aid that would be more effective, accountable and transparent.

This goal can be achieved, but only if ministers in Accra agree concrete actions with specific timetables to improve the transparency of both donors and developing country governments; end the policy conditions donors attached to aid; and end the practice of using aid to promote donor economic and foreign policy interests.

“The current draft of the Accra Agenda for Action (the intended outcome document for the meeting) is very unambitious. In the last draft we have seen, all references to a timetable for implementation had been removed; and it did not have a strong action plan to ensure that the commitments made in Paris will be met by 2010”, said Éamonn Casey, Dóchas Policy Officer.

In Accra this week, NGOs will be lobbying decision-makers for a stronger, more ambitious action plan to be adopted before the Forum has finished; and for progressive donors to commit to more ambitious targets to help show the way forward.

It's important to remember that, delivered effectively, aid works. Thanks to aid, the number of the world's children under five who die each year is declining; enrolment in primary schools in Africa increased to 93% in 2004; in Sub-Saharan Africa, half of the population now has access to clean water.

In relation to Irish Aid, NGOs would like to see them strongly urge other donors, especially the EU, to ensure that the Accra Agenda for Action has more targets and timetables – rather than the rhetoric of good intentions – by which donors will tackle issues like tied aid, the predictability and transparency of aid, and technical assistance being based only on need rather than donors' preferences.

“Ireland is playing an important role in Accra. Irish Aid is co-chairing a governmental meeting that is looking to enhance predictability and accountability of international aid. We feel this puts Ireland in an excellent position to lead aid donors towards real and measurable pledges to improve their performance” said Casey.

“If the world is serious about eradicating poverty, and attaining the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, then the onus is on all of us – governments, NGOs and citizens – to ensure aid has the greatest possible impact. The Ghana meeting is a great opportunity to do so, and Ireland should be at the forefront of these initiatives”.

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CONTACTS

Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, Tel. 085-728 3258

Éamonn Casey, Dóchas Policy Officer, Tel. 087-950 6222

Notes for the editors:

- In the first week of September, more than 1,200 representatives of donors, developing country governments and civil society organisations will gather in Accra, Ghana, for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness organised by the OECD.
Just prior to that, a [parallel event](#) will bring together more than 400 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from 30 August to 1 September, to discuss and finalise their recommendations for those attending the OECD event.
- The [Paris Declaration](#) is an international agreement signed by over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials representing donor and recipient governments and multilateral aid organisations in 2005. It sets out an agenda to make aid more effective and efficient by reducing duplication, transaction costs, and misdirected aid. The essence of the *Paris Declaration* is a commitment by donors to help developing countries' governments formulate and implement their own national development plans, using their own prioritisation, planning and implementation systems wherever possible.
- Since January 2007, CSO networks have worked in an International CSO Steering Group (ISG) to coordinate CSO analysis, proposals and plans for the High Level Forum. The ISG maintains a website, www.betteraid.org, as a portal for CSO initiatives on aid effectiveness, including a Policy Paper signed onto by more than 350 CSOs on aid and development effectiveness reform. The ISG have been meeting with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, based at the OECD DAC, setting out CSO concerns and proposals for the Accra HLF.
- CSOs consider aid effectiveness one of a triad of key issues in development financing – the other two key issues being debt cancellation to end the debt crisis in developing countries, and for rich countries to meet their commitments to give 0.7% of GNI as Official Development Assistance.
- To read the latest version of the draft *Accra Agenda for Action*, click [here](#).
- **Dóchas** is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 39 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie