

Mr Micheál Martin TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Iveagh House
St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

31 May 2010

Ref. EU Foreign Affairs Council June 2010

Dear Minister

On behalf of the 45 member organisations of Dóchas, I am writing to you in advance of the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting on 14 June when EU Development ministers will discuss and agree conclusions on Europe's role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The June FAC meeting is particularly important because the Council Conclusions will constitute the common EU position towards the UN MDG Review Summit, taking place in September. As set out in the attached submission, the members of Dóchas believe it is vital that the EU adopts an ambitious position and takes the lead in preparing a successful UN summit to ensure that the steps needed to halve poverty by 2015 are taken by all concerned.

More specifically we ask that EU member states adopt an "MDG rescue plan" that is concrete and action-oriented and includes monitoring mechanisms. The plan should be based on explicit commitments and targets relating to the implementation of the EU Agenda for Action, and can serve to help the EU use its influence to ensure that a similar plan is adopted at the Summit in September.

It is important to recognise that the MDGs cannot be achieved without the EU and its member states engaging in meaningful and strong partnership with a wide range of stakeholders including civil society organisations in the North and in the South. As Development NGOs, it is our experience that development processes cannot take hold unless vulnerable and marginalised people (especially, women, children and people with disabilities) are included in decision-making processes, and are the clear beneficiaries of long-term, predictable investment in social and human development.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the EU's prime role in achieving the MDGs relates to MDG 8 and its commitment to provide the resources necessary for effective global action. This requires that the EU member states reaffirm their aid commitments, put in place legally-binding timetables of annual aid increases and establish an annual "ODA peer review" as proposed by the European Commission.

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.

We thank you, Minister, for your continued efforts to ensure that international cooperation is at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy, and indeed our future as a nation, and we urge you to build on that realisation by strengthening Ireland's overseas development cooperation programme that can continue to do us proud.

Yours sincerely

Hans Zomer
Director