

Mr Peter Power TD
Minister of State for Overseas Development
Iveagh House
St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

9 June 2010

Ref: EU Foreign Affairs Council, 14 June 2010

Dear Minister

I was delighted to meet you briefly yesterday and hear at first hand of your efforts, and those of your colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs, towards the development of an ambitious EU package in support of the Millennium Development Goals as we advance towards the United Nations MDG Summit in September.

As you know from our position paper on the MDG 10-year review, we believe it is vital that the EU adopts an ambitious position, which includes a concrete and action-oriented plan, in order to promote a successful UN summit and ensure that the steps needed to halve poverty by 2015 are taken by all concerned.

With the EU position to be further developed at, and in advance of, the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 14 June, I am writing on behalf of Dóchas members to suggest some ways in which we think the EU position can be strengthened in preparation for New York.

In common with colleagues from development NGOs across Europe, as represented by CONCORD, the European confederation of relief and development NGOs, we urge that Member States, including Ireland:

1. Reaffirm their 0.7% Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments and put in place legally-binding timetables of annual aid increases; establish an annual "ODA peer review", as proposed by the European Commission, at the Heads of States level and involving the European Parliament;
2. Commit to use the Work Programme on Policy Coherence for Development to guide decision-making at EU and Irish levels in the policy areas which affect developing countries, in particular in the area of trade, finance, agriculture, environment, migration, and security; and to adopt the necessary actions and mechanisms to correct the harmful policies that affect developing countries and impede the impact of development aid;
3. Adopt a human rights based and a gender equality approach, ensuring that vulnerable and marginalised people are the clear beneficiaries according to concrete action plans and there is long term, predictable investment in social and human development.

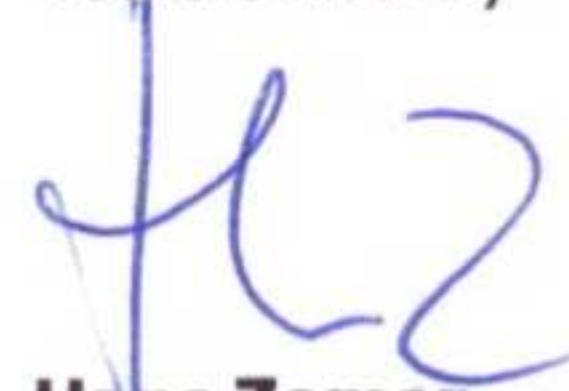
As the Council Conclusions are considered up to 14 June, we would particularly like to see Ireland help strengthen areas that European civil society considers important, including:

- Ensuring that the EU's 0.7% commitment remains clear and strong, but that supporting paragraphs are also strengthened so that the Council would:
 - Urge Member States to put in place binding national yearly timetables (or action plans);
 - Agree a peer review of ODA performance against commitments at Council/ head of State level; and
 - Urge Member States to put in place national legislation to underpin ODA commitments.
- Calling for sustained and enhanced efforts to implement the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness (including issues of ownership and accountability, as well as coordination and division of labour, emphasised in the 1 June conclusions), on which Ireland has taken a strong lead and which will require strong EU commitment in preparations for the Seoul High-Level Forum, and thereafter.
- Inclusion of language to reflect the Council and Member States commitment to the work programme on Policy Coherence for Development, rather than a sense that this is a Commission agenda, and a commitment to the 2011 review of the rolling work programme, as included in previous drafts.
- Reflecting in the Council Conclusions the progressive language on taxation and development from the EC Communication in April, and detailing EU support for a "more development-friendly international framework". This should include: strong EU and Member State support for country-by-country financial reporting for corporations; strengthening developing country-led initiatives to mobilise resources through tax collection; and support for the work of the OECD and others in developing automatic tax information exchange models for the benefit of developing countries.

We thank you for your engagement with Irish NGOs on the MDG review, and hope you are able to support our efforts to ensure that the Council Conclusions address these important details.

Like you, we hope the UN Summit in September can deepen commitment to the MDGs, and accelerate their achievement, especially through building the enabling environment for sustainable human development envisaged in Goal 8.

Yours Sincerely



Hans Zomer
Director