

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

26 June 2009

UN Conference on Global Crisis, June 24-26

**NGOs ask Government to clarify calls for
UN action against poverty**

Minister of State Peter Power calls for UN action,
just weeks after Ireland cut its contribution to UN anti-poverty work

Commenting on yesterday's [25 June] statement by Minister of State Peter Power to the UN Conference on the World Financial Crisis, Irish aid agencies welcomed the government's call for greater resources for international action against global poverty.

They pointed out, however, that since February this year Ireland has cut its overseas aid budget by 22%, and its contributions to the UN by nearly 50%

Minister Power addressed the UN high-level conference on the world financial and economic crisis, taking place in New York.

"It is great to see Ireland call on the international community to step up the fight against global poverty. Minister Power reminded the community of world leaders that the current global crisis will mean that about 200-400,000 more children will die needlessly from poverty, and that urgent action is required to protect the world's most vulnerable people" said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland's development NGOs.

"What we don't understand is how the Minister can make his call for more funding, just weeks after the government has cut the aid budget by a whopping €255 million. As a result of the cuts, Irish contributions to the work of the UN have gone down from €86 million last year to €40.5 million this year" said Zomer.

The UN Conference is debating the global financial crisis and its impact on the world's poorest countries and communities, and comes just days before the world's richest countries will gather in the context of the G8 meeting.

The conference is widely seen to be the opportunity for developing countries to state their case, in contrast to the G8 and G20 meetings, which are dominated by the world's richest countries.

While the impact of the crisis on rich economies is clear, it is the world's poorest countries that are suffering most.

The World Bank has estimated that hundreds of millions of people will fall back into poverty, if countries do not receive "counter-cyclical" assistance. This year alone, a combination of economic recession and food prices will take the number of people on the brink of starvation to a record high of 1.02 billion people – or one-sixth of the world's population – according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

"We welcome the fact that world leaders are gathering to specifically pay attention to the fate of the world's poorest people – those who did least to cause the global finance, climate and fuel crises and that suffer most from their effects" said Hans Zomer on behalf of Irish NGOs.

"Minister Power is right to call for greater resources to help the world's poorest people weather the current crisis. It makes the recent decision by the Irish government to slash the overseas aid budget by 22% all the more difficult to understand" he continued.

In the past twelve months, the government has cut the aid budget four times, slashing a total of €255 million off our development cooperation programme, and reducing our contributions to the UN system to an absolute bare minimum.

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Notes for the Editors

About Dóchas

- Dóchas is the association of 44 of Ireland's development NGOs. For further information, see www.dochas.ie

About the aid cuts

- At the UN Millennium Review Summit in 2005, the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern committed Ireland to reaching the UN target for spending 0.7% of our GNP on overseas aid in 2012.

- The government set interim targets “against which our progress towards the target can be measured”. The interim target set for 2010, next year, is 0.6% of GNI.
- Due to massive and unprecedented cuts to the budget, Ireland’s aid expenditure for 2009 is predicted to fall well short of the target and reach only 0.48% of GNI.
- The Irish overseas aid budget has been cut by €45 million in July 2008, by another €15 million in October, by €95 million in February this year and by a further €100 million in April 2009.
- The cuts in 2009 alone represent 22% of the total aid budget for the year; well in excess of the reduction in national income, which is estimated to be around 8-10%.

About Ireland’s contributions to the UN

- Ireland contributed the following amounts to UN bodies in 2008:

UNDP: €24.5 million
 UNICEF: €17.1 million
 UNHCR: €14.3 million
 UNFPA: €5.5 million
 WHO: € 3.9 million
 Other UN agencies: €21 million

- The expected figures for 2009 are:

UNDP: €9 million
 UNICEF: €8 million
 UNHCR: €6 million
 UNFPA: €3 million
 WHO: € 1.5 million
 Other UN agencies: €13 million

For further information, see www.dochas.ie

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Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 44 members, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas Member Agencies

1. ActionAid Ireland
2. Action from Ireland
3. Africa Centre
4. Aidlink
5. Amnesty International-Irish Section
6. Bóthar
7. Camara
8. Centre for Global Education
9. ChildFund Ireland
10. Children in Crossfire
11. Christian Aid Ireland
12. Christian Blind Mission Ireland
13. Church Mission Society Ireland
14. Comhlámh
15. Concern Worldwide
16. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
17. Galway One World Centre
18. Gorta
19. International Service Ireland
20. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
21. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
22. Irish Council for International Students
23. Irish Family Planning Association
24. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
25. Irish Missionary Union
26. Irish Red Cross
27. Kerry Action for Development Education
28. National Youth Council of Ireland
29. Oxfam Ireland
30. Plan Ireland
31. Progressio Ireland
32. Self Help Africa
33. SightSavers International
34. Skillshare International Ireland
35. Suas Educational Development
36. The Hope Foundation
37. Trócaire
38. Vita
39. Voluntary Service International
40. Voluntary Service Overseas
41. Volunteer Missionary Movement
42. War on Want Northern Ireland
43. Wingspread International
44. World Vision Ireland