Irish NGOs call on world leaders to make a real difference for refugees and migrants ahead of UN summit

A delegation with representatives from Dóchas (the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations), Oxfam Ireland and World Vision will attend the first ever United Nations summit on refugees and migrants in New York this Monday 19th September.

The summit is being co-chaired by Ireland and Jordan and the Irish Government will be represented there by Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald.

Speaking ahead of the summit, Suzanne Keatinge, CEO of Dóchas, said: “As a network of NGOs working on global justice, it is very clear to us that there has been a collective failure by the international community to prevent and respond to the largest refugee crisis in 70 years. The first ever UN Summit on Refugees and Migration, co facilitated by Irish Ambassador to the UN, Mr. David Donoghue, should be the beginning of a process to address this failure. We all have a responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the 65 million people that are displaced today. We sincerely hope the Tánaiste will commit to meeting with and working with Irish civil society immediately after the summit to develop a tangible action plan.”

World Vision CEO, Helen Keoghe echoed the recent calls of the Refugee and Migrant coalition for the Irish Government to urgently accelerate the processing of refugee applications, "Last year the government made a commitment to take up to 4,000 refugees but only 311 have arrived so far. The government needs to prioritise unaccompanied children and to introduce a humanitarian scheme that would allow people living here to bring loved ones to safety in Ireland."

Jim Clarken, Oxfam Ireland Chief Executive, said: “We already know that these summits will not deliver the solutions that the millions of people forced to flee their homes so desperately need. However, it is vital that they mark the beginning of an improved global response where every country does their fair share to protect people on the move.’

“As co-chair of the UN summit, Ireland must lead by example in this by publically committing to share responsibility for refugees – and urging other world leaders to do the same. We’re calling on Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald to show strong leadership by welcoming and protecting more refugees at home in Ireland and making it easier and less dangerous for people forced to flee to reach safety as well as...
supporting communities hosting refugees elsewhere in the world through humanitarian assistance. It’s time for strong commitments and decisive action after these summits end - not more meaningless talk.”

The Dóchas CEO Suzanne Keating cautioned against the use of Overseas Development Aid (ODA) for refugee and migrant related work, “Ireland must continue to hold its proud record of not counting its commitments to taking in refugees within its ODA calculations. It is critical that we continue to seek to provide new additional resources to respond adequately to the needs of refugees, but that should not eat into existing commitments to our ODA spending. To do so would be counterproductive.”

‘Above all what the 65 million people who are displaced across the world need now is urgent and positive action. It is our hope in attending the summit that Ireland will show strong leadership in line with the wishes of the Irish people’, said Keatinge.

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Notes to the Editor:

- The first ever UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants will take place in New York on 19th September. President Obama will host a “Leaders’ Summit” on refugees the day after. Ireland will participate in both. The outcome document which has been agreed as a UNGA resolution was negotiated by UN Member States during the summer, co/facilitated by the Ambassadors of Ireland and Jordan to the UN in New York.

- Minister Fitzgerald will be accompanied by Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development Aid, Joe McHugh T.D. and Director General of Irish Aid, Michael Gaffey.

- Dóchas CEO, Suzanne Keatinge, will be attending the UN summit in New York, alongside Dóchas members, Oxfam, World Vision and Concern Worldwide, including Oxfam Ireland Chief Executive Jim Clarken and World Vision CEO Helen Keogh.

- The European Union devised a system to relocate 160,000 people who have arrived in Europe in need of protection. The allocation was non-binding but on September 10th 2015, Ireland opted in and committed to relocate and resettle up to 4,000 people.

- The Irish Government established a mechanism for relocation to protect the rights of selected refugees relocated here. 311people have been welcomed to Ireland in 2016, 38 via a relocation scheme and 273 via an established resettlement scheme. This puts Ireland on par with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in terms of relocation from Greece.
Dóchas is the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its members, and a platform for them to speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

Dóchas membership is comprised of over 60 overseas development and global justice organisations. A list of Dóchas members can be found at http://www.dochas.ie/membership/our-members/