Dochas
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Act Now on 2015
Deliver Ireland's Aid Promise

Supporting Accelerated Progress on the Millennium Development Goals

A Dóchas position paper on the 10-year progress review

"Rather than retreat, now is the time to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and to strengthen the global partnership for development."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

April 2010

Summary

Ireland signed up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, as world leaders came together at a landmark moment to insist that they would not tolerate the extreme inequality in the world and would do all in their power to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Through the MDGs, they created an unprecedented shared framework to eradicate extreme poverty through coordinated global action.

In September 2010, Member States of the UN will come together in New York to discuss what progress has been made towards the MDGs and agree on the actions that need to be taken. This paper highlights some of the key areas that Ireland needs to progress, in its own right and through the EU, in preparing a Summit that can deliver the accelerated progress needed to achieve the MDGs.

In its own right, and as a Member State of the European Union, Ireland needs to demonstrate its political will in action by delivering on its proportion of the global partnership for development. It can do so by actually delivering the resources pledged in Official Development Assistance (ODA), by being more committed and proactive in relation to policy coherence for development, and by standing solidly for the interests of developing countries in international fora and negotiations.

Since the Millennium Summit, Ireland has repeatedly stated its support for the MDGs, and it is showing leadership in relation to HIV and AIDS, hunger and aid effectiveness. In support of the MDGs, Ireland pledged to increase its ODA, so that we would reach the UN target of spending 0.7% of national income on overseas aid. Since its original pledge in 2000, the Government has twice shifted the date for achieving this international commitment, and now states that its aim is to reach the UN target of a minimum 0.7% by 2015 at the latest.[1]

Learning the lessons of the past 10 years is vital and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has highlighted the failure to deliver the resources needed as the single biggest obstacle to delivering on the Goals. Dóchas calls on the Irish Government to re-commit itself to achieving the MDGs by announcing a detailed and specific action plan to deliver the resources and other supports required.

At the MDG Summit in September, Ireland should cement its latest pledge of reaching the 0.7% target by 2015, with a timetable for binding interim targets and a commitment to enabling legislation, as well as a time-bound and ambitious action plan for progressing policy coherence for development (PCD) at Ireland and EU levels.

Irish NGOs are calling for redoubled Irish Aid efforts, technical initiatives on hunger and related areas, and progressive input into an ambitious EU rescue package for the MDGs. Nonetheless, it is the matching of good intentions with clear political will on the issue of resources for development and Irish policy coherence for development that will truly establish Ireland's *bona fides* at the Summit to generate accelerated MDG progress in September.

[1] In 2000, then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern set a date of 2007, which was later revised to 2012. In December 2009, the Government again moved the target date, now stating that it would be "2015 at the latest". Dóchas estimates that this decision means that Ireland will spend some €750 million less in development assistance over that period.

As preparations and negotiations for the Summit continue, Dóchas argues that:

1. **It is impossible to deliver the MDGs without developed countries enabling the release of the resources needed to do so.** Developed countries need to deliver on their promises on a global partnership for development, by providing the greatly expanded ODA they have pledged, allowing market access and fairer trade, eliminating export subsidies, including on agriculture, and relieving unsustainable debt, to create the enabling conditions for development.
2. As a symbol of their seriousness about achieving the MDGs**, the Member States of the EU must agree a concrete, ambitious and action-oriented MDG plan** that includes monitoring mechanisms, recognises the importance of tackling the MDGs as one holistic package, and takes a human rights and gender equality approach.
3. **Ireland and other EU Member States must urgently commit to increasing the quantity and quality of their ODA**, and use their influence to persuade other donors to perform better at the UN Summit in September and at other international fora in the run-up to it.
4. **Ireland should commit to an ambitious and concrete national action plan to support accelerated progress on the MDGs, including by tackling key areas of policy incoherence** that create obstacles for development, thus helping to dismantle structures and mechanisms that represent obstacles for developing countries striving for the MDGs and sustainable human development;
5. **Ireland must build on its stated strategic focus on hunger to make significant inroads on MDG 1**, particularly by promoting smallholder agriculture with a particular focus and recognition of the crucial role of women in agriculture, the importance of integrating nutrition, the right to food, and relevant policy coherence for development initiatives at global, EU and Irish levels;
6. **Ireland should advocate for an approach towards the MDGs that focuses on people's rights, and specifically seeks to include marginalised groups in decisions that affect them.** In relation to such a rights-based approach to achieving the MDGs, Ireland should support particular efforts to ensure that all programmes designed to progress the MDGs identify which groups are facing discrimination in the country, collect disaggregated data (particularly for the most marginalised groups). They should also ensure that implementation is closely and carefully monitored to ensure that MDG efforts are directed towards addressing discrimination and inequalities, and that they prioritise the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Many commitments have been made, but the international community is still well off track to achieving the MDGs by 2015. Now is the time to show real political will to follow through on the Millennium Declaration.

1. Introduction

Agreement on the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs by the international community at the Millennium Conference in 2000 represented an unprecedented opportunity to address global poverty through co-ordinated global action. All 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organisations signed up to the MDGs, committing to achieve them by 2015. It's worth noting the commitments made, and the impact their achievement would have on the lives of millions of people living in poverty:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The MDGs not only set quantitative objectives to be achieved by 2015: they also drive international development policy by spelling out the responsibilities of rich countries to support poor countries through aid, debt relief and improved market access.

And the stakes are high. If the MDGs are implemented on time in all parts of the globe, hundreds of millions fewer people will be living in extreme poverty, or be denied the right to food. Many millions more will have access to safe drinking water or life-saving drugs.

The MDGs are a vital focus for development work because they capture the collective responsibility to eliminate extreme poverty, and to share the costs and benefits of globalisation. If the MDGs are met, real economic and social opportunities will open up on a vast scale.

Ireland's International Commitment to the Millennium Development Goals

"Today, on behalf of the Government and people of Ireland, I wish in this forum publicly to make a commitment to fully meeting the United Nations target of spending 0.7% of GNP on Official Development Assistance. We are putting in place an interim target for the expansion of the programme by the end of 2002 of 0.45% of GNP and we will reach the UN target **by the end of 2007**."

An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, 6 Sept 2000, at the Millennium Summit

"We do not need to make further pledges if we just deliver on what we have already promised. The commitments and the know-how are already there. It is the political will and action that will make the difference."

An Taoiseach Brian Cowen, 25 Sept 2008

"It is now clear that the current downturn in economic circumstances will prevent us from achieving our goal ahead of the EU target date. The Government is nevertheless committed to meeting the EU target of spending 0.7% of GNP on ODA **by 2015**."

Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin, 9 December 2009

Ten years on, progress has been uneven and, in many instances, well behind what is required. In addition, the food crisis, environmental damage and the impact of the global economic recession has put further progress in jeopardy.

The unpalatable reality is that the MDGs are not being met, despite the international community pledging in the Millennium Declaration that "we will spare no effort" to do so, and the cost continues to be paid in human lives and suffering.

The MDG review summit in 2010 is a crucial opportunity to ensure that the MDGs remain central in the fight against global poverty, as well as to increase awareness, understanding and public ownership of this vital agenda – both in developed countries and developing countries – because it is people that create, and can change, the structural causes of poverty.

The global economic crisis is driving millions more people into poverty and placing them at increased risk of violation of their social and economic rights. The world and its citizens urgently need a different kind of response and a different kind of leadership if we are to reverse this recent escalation of human misery and make real inroads towards making poverty history.

This paper, drawing on the collective knowledge and strengths of Dóchas members, sets out some specific recommendations to the Irish government for the MDG review this year. As preparations and negotiations for the Summit continue, Dóchas argues that:

1. **The last 10 years have shown that it is impossible to deliver the MDGs without developed countries enabling the release of the resources needed to do so.** Developed countries need to deliver on their promises on a global partnership for development, by providing the greatly expanded ODA they have pledged, allowing market access and fairer trade, eliminating export subsidies, including on agriculture, and relieving unsustainable debt, to create the enabling conditions for development.
2. As a symbol of their seriousness about achieving the MDGs**, the Member States of the EU must agree a concrete, ambitious and action-oriented MDG plan** that includes monitoring mechanisms, recognises the importance of tackling the MDGs as one holistic package, and takes a human rights and gender equality approach.
3. **Ireland and other EU Member States must urgently commit to increasing the quantity and quality of their ODA**, and use their influence to persuade other donors to perform better at the UN Summit in September and at other international fora in the run-up to it.
4. **Ireland should commit to an ambitious and concrete national action plan to support accelerated progress on the MDGs, including by tackling key areas of policy incoherence** that create obstacles for development, thus helping to dismantle structures and mechanisms that represent obstacles for developing countries striving for the MDGs and sustainable human development;
5. **Ireland must build on its stated strategic focus on hunger to make significant inroads on MDG 1**, particularly by promoting smallholder agriculture with a particular focus and recognition of the crucial role of women in agriculture, the importance of integrating nutrition, the right to food, and relevant policy coherence for development initiatives at global, EU and Irish levels;

6. **Ireland should advocate for an approach towards the MDGs that focuses on people's rights, and specifically seeks to include marginalised groups in decisions that affect them.** In relation to such a rights-based approach to achieving the MDGs, Ireland should support particular efforts to ensure that all programmes designed to progress the MDGs identify which groups are facing discrimination in the country, collect disaggregated data (particularly for the most marginalised groups). They should also ensure that implementation is closely and carefully monitored to ensure that MDG efforts are directed towards addressing discrimination and inequalities, and that they prioritise the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Dóchas recognises that the MDGs are strongly interlinked and that achieving progress towards one Goal often depends on doing likewise with another. The Summit in September will require demonstrable and appropriate commitments on each and every MDG, mindful of the links between them as an integrated package, but this paper focuses primarily on Goals 8 and 1, in an effort to influence Ireland's priorities and positions on a number of issues that Irish NGOs consider key – and bearing in mind Ireland's stated commitment to taking a leading role within international efforts to address the root causes of hunger.

The paper also addresses the importance of adopting an overarching rights- and equality-based approach to achieving the MDGs, highlighting issues of non-discrimination, participation, transparency, inclusion, accountability, human dignity and the rule of law – all necessary in order to achieve meaningful and sustainable progress across each and every Goal area.

Finally, although this paper focuses to a large degree on the specific contribution Ireland can make towards progressing MDG priorities, Dóchas is very mindful that the EU has a vital role to play and should take a lead role in accelerating progress. The EU needs to adopt a concrete, ambitious time-bound rescue plan for the MDGs at the EU Heads of State summit in June; support the development of a wider, global MDG rescue plan; and urgently fulfil its own commitments in relation to more and better development assistance, tackling climate change and addressing other policies which are incoherent and undermining development efforts

Meaningful European leadership must be shown at the UN Summit through a progressive and ambitious rescue plan. CONCORD's detailed position paper, focusing on the EU dimension and addressing each of the eight Goals, sets out the requirement for Europe and the specific areas in which its leadership can be proven.

2. MDG Eight − Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Achieving progress on MDG 8 is vital to creating the enabling environment for development within which poor countries and their citizens can demand their rights as global citizens, and within which wealthier countries and their citizens act in true solidarity with them. In its absence, we cannot move towards sustainable human development.

A key message from Dóchas members is that, in supporting the MDGs, Ireland has a vital role to play in delivering on MDG 8 – as have other EU Member States, official development cooperation divisions and European NGOs.

A global partnership for development is central to achieving the Goals. MDG 8 cuts across all Goals in that it is about addressing structural injustices in the international economic, financial and trading systems to truly deliver policy coherence for development, in order to liberate the necessary resources and create the conditions for achieving the MDGs. This requires high-level political commitment and the will to act across a range of policy areas on a global scale in the interests of sustainable development.

To date, this political will has been inadequate and there has been insufficient progress made in relation to many of the key areas covered by MDG 8. In the absence of a successful conclusion to the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, for example, many developed countries − including the EU − have pursued bilateral trade agreements that are driven by self-interest rather than development objectives. Thus, in the EUs approach to negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements with ACP countries, the EC has consistently failed to interpret WTO liberalisation requirements in the most flexible manner, while at the same time insisting that ACP countries negotiate a range of issues that they have already rejected in multilateral fora.

There has been some increase in global levels of ODA, but donors have largely failed to deliver the level of increases promised – and the levels needed to achieve the MDGs – as well as on wider policy coherence for development. Indeed, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon reported in his MDG review paper in March 2010 that the shortfalls in progress towards the MDGs are not because they are unreachable or because the time is too short, but largely because of unmet commitments and inadequate resources.

“The promise of delivering adequate aid remains unfulfilled,” the UN Secretary-General stated, and “ensuring the adequacy of resources is the major challenge in achieving development, including the Millennium Development Goals”. Furthermore, a large proportion of global aid increases have gone to a few post-conflict countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, while the poorest regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa are receiving far less than is needed.

To date, progress on aid effectiveness has been poor and international debt relief efforts have been insufficient to bring about sustainable debt levels for developing countries. The international financial system is still heavily weighted against developing countries, due to undemocratic International Financial Institutions (IFIs), complex taxation regimes that facilitate tax avoidance and tax evasion, and financial regulations and reporting structures stacked in favour of wealthy countries and/or their companies.

The recent financial and food crises have exacerbated the challenges faced by developing countries, which are not just likely to receive less aid (and less predictable aid) than has been pledged but are also faced with a return to the debt spiral and fewer possibilities to mobilise domestic resources, through taxation, for example.

Trade has great potential to support the achievement of the MDGs, but only if development goals and priorities are properly integrated into trade policy and processes at global, regional and national levels. As the world’s second biggest economic bloc and the biggest trade partner for many developing countries, the EU has a key role to play – and so too has Ireland, both in formulating its own trade policies and contributing to the shape of EU policy.

Trade, agricultural, environmental, migration, financial, and many other Irish and European policies have clear impact on the capacity of developing countries to attain the MDGs. Not only have these policies not sufficiently and directly contributed to poverty eradication globally, but their frequent inconsistency with development goals can be costly and even negate the impact

of development assistance. Achieving the MDGs will only be possible if we ensure that policies elaborated at EU and Member States' levels are consistent with the EU's legally binding development objectives.

The Institute for International Integration Studies (IIIS), commissioned by the Advisory Board for Irish Aid, has analysed Ireland's policy coherence for development and made recommendations for improvement. Reporting in 2009, the IIIS identified many areas where Irish government policies, and Ireland's contribution to EU policies, could be tackled to reduce damage to developing country interests. Prominent among these were trade, agriculture, fisheries, migration, and the environment.

Given greatly increased challenges in recent years – with the economic and financial crises, the worsening hunger crisis, climate change, etc – it is vital that more is done to translate MDG 8 into reality. This can be progressed in an urgent way by delivering the financing for development and taking forward concrete, actionable plans to improve policy coherence for development, especially in relation to agriculture and trade, as part of a genuine effort to construct the "global partnership for development" called for in the Millennium Declaration.

MDG 8: Recommendations

Dóchas recommends that the Irish delegation attending the UN Summit works towards:

I. **The provision of more and better financing for the MDGs**

- Donors, including Ireland, must meet their promises on aid and deliver at least 0.7% of GNI in Official Development Aid (ODA) by 2015 at the very latest. The Irish Government should set out a binding annual timetable to reach a minimum 0.7% ODA/GNI by 2015 at the latest, and legislate for the provision of a minimum 0.7%.
  At EU level, Ireland should push for binding interim ODA targets, to ensure that the EU-27 meet their collective commitment to deliver 0.7% by 2015, and to ensure that they are held accountable for this in the context of the MDGs.
- Making aid more effective: Donors, including Ireland, should continue to step up efforts to improve the quality of aid at national/EU levels and report annually on the progress made in the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action Commitments. They should also agree to new binding commitments on aid effectiveness at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Seoul in 2011.
- Helping developing countries mobilise domestic resources: Donors, including Ireland, should provide developing countries with the tools they need to mobilise and retain domestic resources effectively, including through tackling capital flight and, particularly, corporate tax evasion and avoidance. Dóchas members urge that Ireland promote country-by-country financial reporting standards and a stronger UN Committee of Tax Experts. Ireland should also support developing country-led initiatives aimed at strengthening tax collection capacities in developing countries.
- Debt cancellation: Conditions on debt relief being imposed by international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF are still serving to infringe on people's life. Donors, including Ireland, should support the cancellation of debt for developing countries which carry an unsustainable debt burden. This should include the cancellation of illegitimate debts.

II. **Delivering fairer trade policies**

- Strive to ensure that wealthy countries (and the EU in particular) do not apply undue pressure on developing countries to liberalise and deregulate their economies in the financial, industrial, agricultural or wider service sectors, via the WTO or EU regional and bilateral negotiations.
- Urge a fundamental review of the EU trade and investment agenda, as part of the EU 2020 process, in order to prioritise development objectives;
- Strongly advocate that the EU's Aid for Trade should cohere with development and human rights objectives, such as the right to adequate food. For instance, the strategy should systematically provide support to small producers and should be revised to ensure same. EU Member States' national strategies on Aid for Trade, including Ireland's, should reinforce such a revised EU approach.
- Consider the merits of supporting the 'early harvest' proposal made by Least Developed Countries, in the context of the Doha Round, in October 2009.

III. **Fairer international policies and governance structures**

- Specifically address Ireland's **policy coherence for development:** Ireland should urgently develop a concrete and ambitious National Action Plan on PCD that will support accelerated delivery of the MDGs in order to meet the 2015 target date. This should include concrete, time-bound plans to redress Irish policies that are damaging to developing country interests (and which therefore impinge on their efforts to deliver the MDGs), especially in relation to trade, agriculture, fisheries, migration and the environment – as identified by the Institute for International Integration Studies.
  Ireland should also ensure that the EU work programme on PCD for 2010-2013 is developed with a view to attaining the MDG targets and to assessing the impact of all relevant EU policies on the progress made towards the MDGs.
- Reform of the IFIs: Members, such as Ireland, should play a key role in a major reform of the IFIs, starting with truly democratic structures and the improvement of transparency, based on the principle of the right to information.
- End harmful policy conditionality. Ireland should support an end to the practice of imposing harmful policy conditionality at the IFIs, and support a shift to internationally binding, fair and responsible financing standards between lenders and borrowers.
- Ireland – deeply affected itself by impropriety and regulatory weaknesses – should promote robust global regulation of financial activities, taking into account the risks posed by highly leveraged speculative activities, unregulated financial instruments and institutions, and secrecy jurisdictions. Country-by-country financial reporting by commercial enterprises would also help address tax avoidance and tax evasion

3. MDG One − Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

One of the targets of MDG1 is to reduce the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by half by 2015, with hunger measured as the proportion of the population who are undernourished and the prevalence of children under five who are underweight.

In a world that produces enough food to feed itself, one in six people still go hungry, 129 million children are underweight and 195 million children are stunted by hunger and malnutrition. In many parts of the world, lack of food security and poor nutrition are worsening the effects of the HIV epidemic: without access to food either from their own food production or from income earned, people with HIV are likely to develop AIDS and become sicker quicker while those on treatment will struggle to absorb the medication and may be unable to continue treatment.

Our collective failure to ensure the right to food is unacceptable. Ireland has rightly prioritised progress on Goal 1 as a key priority within the MDG framework. We know what works: what is missing is the political will to address the impact of hunger and food insecurity but, more importantly, their underlying causes.

Hunger can only be addressed by focusing especially on the availability, accessibility and adequacy of food. Addressing hunger goes beyond caloric intake and food production. Adequate access to affordable, sufficiently diverse food; addressing issues of control of productive assets, and reducing losses and waste are also needed. In addition, 60% of the one billion people facing hunger are women, most of whom earn a living from farming while carrying the responsibility for providing food for their families. Efforts to reduce hunger need to be linked with wider efforts to empower women, and to create work and business opportunities.

Addressing hunger and under-nutrition also has clear links and benefits to reaching other MDG targets in health, income, education, HIV and AIDS, gender equality, and the environment.

MDG 1: Recommendations

Dóchas recommends that the Irish delegation attending the review summit actively promotes:

I. **Sustained and better targeted investment in smallholder agriculture, with a particular focus on women**
   - The international commitments made, such as through the L'Aquila Initiative, need to represent additional funding and to be delivered within the agreed timeframe. Commitments need to be predictable and support long term programmes. They also need to be coherent with policies focused on securing sustainable, local food access and supply, using low external input agro-ecological approaches that improve climate resilience as well as productivity. Proper consideration must be paid to the composition and targeting of increased investment. Investment must be led by and benefit smallholder and marginal ("farming yet hungry") farmers.

II. **Specific recognition of women's role in the fight against hunger, and support to women's groups in improving their livelihoods and food security**
   - Investment in agriculture must be based on policies designed to take into account the specific challenges faced by women. The needs facing poor women farmers are often neither recognised nor understood. Economic progress among women producers is more likely to translate into improved nutrition and education of children,

but women are generally excluded from decision-making processes and lack either access to, or control of, productive resources. Having first listened to their needs, policy-makers must specifically target women farmers, who face multiple constraints, in a diverse but linked number of areas, including agriculture/rural development, nutrition interventions and access to services.

III. **Integration of nutrition into related sectors**

- Current efforts to address hunger and under-nutrition are largely focused on agricultural production and improved access to food. While agriculture is a key driver of economic growth and poverty reduction, supporting it alone will not address food security and overcome malnutrition in its various forms. Related issues such as strengthening health systems, gender equality and women's education must be addressed in equal measure. Agricultural policies and programmes, and those tackling HIV and AIDS, must be designed to contribute to the goal of improved nutrition. Nutrition outcomes, participants' well-being and overall programme impact can be improved by integrating nutritional support into programmes and policies addressing agricultural production, public health, HIV and AIDS, and so forth.

IV. **Taking the right to food seriously**

- Greater and accelerated support for the MDGs must ensure that global, regional and national policies that have an impact on food production, markets and access to food are consistent with vindicating poor people's right to food, understood as everyone's right to feed oneself in dignity. Crucially, local production systems and food markets must be respected, and their potential to support small producers' livelihoods and rural development must be advanced through complementary policies. Linked to this, support must be given to ongoing efforts to improve coordination and governance of the global food system, such as the reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Technical assistance and support should be provided to strengthen national capacities to develop, implement and monitor either comprehensive national development plans that specifically incorporate food security, or else separate food security plans.

V. **Specifically addressing hunger-related aspects of policy coherence**

- In championing the global fight against hunger, Ireland should include in a concrete and ambitious National Action Plan on Policy Coherence for Development 2010-2015 specific relevant actions in relation to agriculture, trade, fisheries and the environment that would accelerate delivery of MDG 1. The government-appointed Special Envoy on Hunger should be tasked with identifying specific areas where greater policy coherence for development would contribute to tackling hunger, as called for in the IIIS report to the Government.

  Reporting in March 2010 on the continuing challenges to achieving the MDGs, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted, inter alia, the need for developed countries to honour their pledge to eliminate export subsidies, including on agriculture, that seriously hinder trade and farm production in developing countries.

  Specific areas to address might include: Ireland working to ensure that neither EU subsidised exports nor reforms of the Common Agricultural Programme damage developing country food production (notably agriculture and fisheries), particularly in African countries; ensuring that development considerations are adequately taken into account in addressing tariff lines, special and differential treatment of certain

products, and other matters under negotiation in the Doha Round; monitoring Fisheries Partnership Agreements for their impact on fish stocks and livelihoods, and amending them as required; addressing sustainability and food security concerns around biofuels; and providing funding, additional to ODA, to support climate change adaptation funds under the UNFCCC.

Implementation of an Irish action plan on PCD, including specific efforts to address national and EU incoherencies in relation to agriculture/food security, would greatly enhance Ireland's voice and credibility in championing the fight against hunger.

4. A Rights-Based Approach to Tackling the MDGs

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated in his March 2010 review report, the norms and values of international human rights instruments must provide the foundation for engagement on the MDGs, especially the key human rights principles of non-discrimination, meaningful participation and accountability. Despite the recognition of human rights in the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs framework largely ignores states' human rights obligations.

The current MDG structure does not explicitly take into account excluded or marginalised groups, creating a real danger that they will be further pushed into poverty in the drive to reach general targets and indicators. This includes women and girls, people with disabilities, older people, very young children, and minority and indigenous communities.

Groups of vulnerable and marginalised people must be included in development policies and programmes to ensure that action to reduce poverty effectively targets and reaches those who are most marginalised. The MDGs will only be achieved if the rights of people and communities to participate actively and meaningfully in plans, policies and programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs are respected and fulfilled.

In its own right and through the EU, Ireland can play an important role in ensuring that human rights norms and values are centre-stage in the push to accelerate delivery of the MDGs over the next five years, and within international discussions on the post-2015 framework.

Rights-Based Approach: Recommendations

Dóchas recommends that the Irish delegation attending the MDG review summit:

I. Actively ensures that all programmes designed to accelerate progress on the MDGs identify which groups are facing discrimination, collect disaggregated data (particularly for the most marginalised groups) and monitor implementation to ensure that MDG efforts are directed towards addressing discrimination and inequalities, and prioritise the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups.
II. Ensure meaningful participation of people living in poverty, and in particular the equal participation of women, in MDG planning, activities and monitoring at all levels;
III. Strengthen accountability mechanisms between developed and developing countries, and between Governments and their citizens, to ensure MDG commitments are honoured.

5. Conclusions − Realising the Promise of the MDGs

The UN has affirmed the right to development in addition to the other rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the rights-based approach affirms human rights to social protection and rejection of social exclusion. Fulfilling the rights of each and every citizen requires political commitment, and the MDG framework has identified stakeholders and duty bearers with well-defined responsibilities, establishing accountability for development outcomes.

Yet with resources being made available for development not matching up to the requirements, ensuring the adequacy of resources is the major challenge in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as identified by the UN Secretary-General.

On the one hand, the right to development of billions of people is not being vindicated despite the historic MDG initiative and, on the other, those with duties and responsibilities are not meeting them. The MDGs represent a pact to work collectively to fight hunger, poverty and disease but, in many ways, the promises agreed are not being delivered.

While developing country governments, UN agencies and NGOs have important inputs to make, progressive developed countries have an absolutely vital role in promoting policy coherence for development, reforming the structures and mechanisms that keep developing countries from making progress, establishing the enabling environment for sustainable human development, and providing the resources needed to achieve the MDGs.

Countries such as Ireland have to play their part by meeting their commitments to increase the quantity and quality of development assistance, reduce trade-distorting subsidies, improve fair market access for developing countries' exports, tackle the climate change that they have largely caused, deliver on coherence for development, and otherwise create the "Global Partnership for Development" to which they have committed in MDG 8.

And it's high time to move beyond wishing that duty-bearers would live up to their responsibility, but rather demanding that they do so and holding them accountable. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon pointed out on 16 March 2010, the time has come to deliver on promises to create an accountability mechanism between developed and developing countries (as agreed in the Monterrey Consensus and the Accra Plan of Action), as well as between Governments and their citizens, to ensure that MDG commitments are honoured.

With only five years to go, the MDG review year in 2010 needs to bring an endorsement of an accountability framework that consolidates global commitments, links these to results with timelines, and establishes monitoring and enforcing mechanisms. This would lead to a really meaningful contribution to the sustainable human development the MDGs are intended to deliver. In the long term, this would also help shift the debate from developed and developing, wealth, poverty and aid, to one about rights, responsibilities, justice and sustainable global development.

As An Taoiseach Brian Cowen noted in September 2008, in reaffirming Ireland's international commitment to the MDGs:

> ***"We do not need to make further pledges if we just deliver on what we have already promised. The commitments and the know-how are already there. It is the political will and action that will make the difference."***