

## **Church leaders statement about our overseas aid promise**

September 2009

(Note: since the publication of this statement, the Government has moved the target date for the achievement of the 0.7% ODA/GNI target from 2012 to 2015)

*“Ireland is at a crucial moment in its history. Faced with serious challenges, the choices it makes now – as a country and society – will chart its course for many years to come. Notwithstanding the current difficulties within the Irish economy and the pressure these difficulties place on Irish people, in deciding how it responds to these challenges, Ireland must also stay true to its core values – those which define it as a nation within the international community – values such as solidarity, co-operation and integrity.*

*Publicly and politically, Ireland's partnership with the developing world runs deep. Development and humanitarian policies sit at the heart of its foreign policy and this reflects an intention and an ambition to engage with the wider world in ways that promote peace, development, prosperity and justice.*

*Ireland's long-standing commitment to increasing the volume and quality of its development and humanitarian assistance has strengthened its effectiveness as a development actor and ensured an international reputation as a progressive donor.*

*Unfortunately, both have been overshadowed over the past 12 months by four successive cuts to the overseas aid budget that have totalled €255 million.*

*These cuts have already had huge implications for the poorest and most vulnerable across the developing world – hindering progress in health and education, undermining Ireland's goal to help tackle hunger and, in some instances, threatening the lives and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable of our world.*

*Ireland is well placed to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to the elimination of hunger and poverty. This country's ability to show leadership and nurture development has been demonstrated in the past. In these most challenging times, Ireland can and should respond to the needs of the world's poorest people with a clear determination to do the right thing. Ireland can and should show leadership and honour its international commitments on overseas aid by 2012 as it declared it would.*

*We call on Ireland to stay the course on overseas aid by demonstrating its commitment in these difficult times – not turning its back on those living in poverty, for whom things are immeasurably tougher. Ireland can and should get back on track as a nation and keep its promise to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on official development assistance by 2012.”*

- Cardinal SEÁN BRADY, Catholic Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop, Armagh;
- ALAN HARPER, Church of Ireland Primate of All Ireland, Armagh;
- Rev STAFFORD CARSON, Moderator, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Belfast;
- Rev DONALD KER, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Belfast;
- ALAN PIM, Clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Dublin.