

Aid is now more important than ever – also for Ireland itself

At the heart of Ireland's foreign policy is a long-standing contribution to international development cooperation. It reflects the best of what we are as a nation and translates values such as human dignity, equality and partnership into practical action which improves the lives of millions of people across the developing world.

Over the past 40 years, Ireland has built an enviable international reputation in emergency response and long-term development. Our actions have given us credibility, influence and leverage on the world stage. There is also a measure of "enlightened self-interest" in the fact that a safer, more secure world is good for Ireland too.

As the *White Paper on Irish Aid* states, Ireland's "efforts to help create a more prosperous and equitable world will also help bring about a safer and more stable world" – an important goal for Ireland as a small, open economy, highly vulnerable to global shocks but well placed to benefit from security, stability, confidence and renewed economic growth.

It was for these reasons that, at September's UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, Minister Micheál Martin took the commendable step to recommit Ireland to reaching the 0.7% promise by 2015.

Ireland knows that it needs to play an active and responsible role as a member of the global society of nations, and that international development cooperation is vital for our future.

Safeguarding our foreign policy requires a plan to reach 0.7% by 2015

Dóchas and the 70 organisations in the "**Act Now on 2015**" campaign, consider that our overseas aid promise constitutes a vital part of Ireland's foreign policy, and that our commitment to our international and European counterparts requires that we deliver on the promise. We call on the Government to:

- **Demonstrate visible progress in Budget 2011 towards the 2015 commitment.**
- **Outline, within the four-year budgetary framework, the annual percentage increases towards Ireland reaching the 0.7% target by 2015.**

The UN MDG Summit in September 2010 concluded with a clear call on donors "to establish, as soon as possible, *rolling indicative timetables* that illustrate how they aim to reach their goals".

The OECD has made repeated calls for donor nations to honour overseas aid commitments, and the European Commission has called for Member States to "establish *realistic, verifiable annual action plans for reaching individual targets*... [and] consider enacting legislation for setting ODA targets".

Multi-year ODA spending plans would strengthen significantly our commitment to Aid Effectiveness, which Ireland is championing at international level. Without sufficient and predictable ODA spending, its leadership with peers in the donor community is weakened.

Predictability is vital to aid effectiveness and value for money. Overseas aid loses between 10 percent and 20 percent of its value globally when it is not predictable, according to the OECD.

Public support for investing in development remains strong

Some commentators argue that ‘charity begins at home’ and that Ireland cannot afford overseas aid in the current climate. Dóchas argues strongly that Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending is not a matter of ‘charity’ but a solemn international commitment, underpinning Ireland’s foreign policy priorities of supporting multilateralism, justice and stability in the world.

There is striking public support for Ireland’s engagement in development cooperation, despite the current crisis: more than 80 percent of respondents in a July 2010 Ipsos-MRBI poll for Dóchas expressed the view that Ireland should continue to support overseas aid even in the face of its economic difficulties.

In addition to supporting aid agencies directly, the Irish public believes that Ireland should support the global effort to address extreme poverty, hunger, disease and social justice. ODA is essential for development: the European Commission has noted how vital it is to developing countries trying to maintain social cohesion and basic social services. Overseas aid, it says, is a good investment in regional stability and future prospects for economic recovery.

Delaying aid increases or failing to deliver them means stalling progress on the Millennium Development Goals. As the European Commission stated in its 2010 April package:

“It may not be easy to keep our collective promises to devote 0.7% of our GNI to ODA by 2015... but it is still feasible and necessary. It is a question of foresight and political will.”

The rationale to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality is clear.

There is cross-party political support in the Oireachtas for Ireland’s aid commitment. Government policy states that Ireland will deliver on its 0.7% commitment by 2015.

Through these desperately difficult times, your leadership is essential – to protect this policy, our international reputation and above all the very poorest of our world.

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