

## Dochas Submission to Irish Political Parties General Election Manifestos

# Ireland in the World: An international development agenda for the next Irish Government

August 2015

The next General election will come at an important time in Irish history. Next year Ireland will celebrate the centenary of the 1916 Rising, a momentous point in Irish history which gives us an opportunity to reflect on and re-think our priorities as a country and our ideas of how to shape our future.

We live in an age characterised by global interconnectedness, Ireland's strong international reputation is central to our prosperity. This reputation is one that is not only built on our history in arts, culture and in business, but also as a global leader in the field of humanitarian and development assistance. Our record of principled engagement in these areas, linked to Ireland's own experience of famine, has become a strong aspect of Irish national identity.

The 1916 Rising took place within a global context of social and political change. Much has changed since then and more than ever before, the decisions we take in Ireland today depend on, and are influenced by, the global community of peoples. **The next elections should reflect that Ireland is part of an international community and that Ireland is, in fact, "a global island".**

In September 2015, world leaders will agree a new set of global priorities, a 'recipe' for a better world. They will change the landscape of traditional development policies, moving the focus from developing countries to a global, universal application of the goals including Ireland.

The challenge at the heart of this new global agreement is: how do we build societies that thrive and that look after the interests of current generations, as well as the interests of future generations, and of the planet? **How do we build societies that are fair, prosperous and respectful of the planet we live on?**

This challenge is universal. Every nation on Earth will need to grapple with it and, in cooperation with others, develop its own national plan of action to help attain our shared aspirations and the globally agreed "sustainable development goals".

Ireland, due to our strong international reputation, has been at the forefront of international discussions and initiatives to help shape this new reality of worldwide inter-dependence. The challenge is now to ensure that the commitments that are adopted at this global level deliver real results for all people and for the planet.

## People

While we live in a period of historically unprecedented global health and wealth, the benefits of prosperity have not been shared equally. It has been internationally recognised that the large and growing income gap between rich and poor is the biggest risk to the global community in the next decade. Any Irish government will need to ensure that development strategies “leave no-one behind” and that equality and social justice are actively promoted.

### Recommendations:

- 1) ***All parties should make explicit reference to the global Sustainable Development Goals as the overarching framework for decision-making in Ireland.*** These new Goals, being negotiated under Irish leadership at UN level, will provide the context for Irish policy making in areas as diverse as foreign policy, agriculture, health, taxation, energy, water, transport, town planning, migration, housing and labour markets.

This means:

- Ireland must develop **an ambitious national plan of action** to implement and monitor the Goals and Indicators contained in the Sustainable Development Goals that can inspire the rest of the world and position Ireland as a global leader in innovation, equality and green growth;
- Ireland must ensure our own model of development meets the needs of all the people living today with an emphasis on the most vulnerable and marginalised populations, while protecting the sustainability of future generations;
- Ireland must prioritise, within that action plan, measures that aim to achieve Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) in order to redress Irish policies that are damaging to the world’s poorest countries.
- Ireland must commit to communicate and raise awareness of the commitments, spirit and approach that underpin this new sustainable agenda in order to enable and empower all people, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalised women and men, to be active agents in the collective implementation of the agenda.

- 2) ***All parties should strive to use Ireland’s influence abroad to further our values and interests and to ensure our nation reflects, protects and fulfils our obligations under international human rights treaties and conventions.***

This means:

- Ireland must build an enabling environment ensuring that companies, and in particular Irish companies working in developing countries, provide decent work and sustainable jobs, build communities and respect people’s rights. Such an enabling environment must include mandatory reporting requirements and complaints mechanisms including how best to ensure remedy for potential victims overseas of human rights abuses by Irish companies;
- Ireland must establish and implement the right legal and institutional framework to ensure that Irish law and practice do not enable companies or individuals to avoid or evade taxes;
- Ireland must ensure that respect for human rights is integral to all aspects of Ireland’s engagement internationally including a particular focus on women and girl’s rights; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights; and the rights of human rights defenders.

## Planet

It is imperative that our efforts to increase prosperity for current generations do not undermine the ability of future generations to do likewise. Environmental degradation, resource scarcity and climate change are already impacting on millions of people's lives, in particular those that are most vulnerable. Climate change in particular amplifies existing political, social and economic inequalities.

### Recommendations:

**3) *All parties must sign up to a fair and safe international climate deal and meet Ireland's adaptation financing commitments***

This means:

- Meeting Ireland's 2020 emissions targets through relevant domestic action;
- Implementing agricultural and land use policies that reduce emissions and prioritise global food security for all;
- Ensuring sufficient investment in adaption and resilience building activities that are targeted at and designed with the active participation of the most vulnerable people and communities;
- Agree a strategy so that Ireland meets its fair share of international climate finance obligations in addition to our official development assistance (ODA) obligations.

## Prosperity

As a small, open economy, Ireland's own prosperity depends on our ability to trade with others in a world that is rules-based, stable and prosperous. Such a world does not come about without effort and without constant care. Our prosperity therefore depends on our willingness to invest through our practices and policy in international governance, security, stability and development.

### Recommendations:

**4) *All parties must commit to increasing the resources available for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, by supporting enhanced Financing for Development, through:***

- **An explicit commitment to a steady and continuous increase in Ireland's budget for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to reach the UN target of 0.7% ODA/GNI by 2020. This includes the publication of a timetable with interim targets, in euro and percentage terms, for the years 2016-2020;**
- Introducing framework legislation to underpin Ireland's commitment to the State's programme of official development assistance (ODA) and the UN target of investing 0.7% of national income in overseas aid by 2020;
- Strengthening tax collection capacities in Irelands Key Partner Countries in support of poverty reduction, social equality and sustainable development;
- Supporting the establishment of an intergovernmental body on tax under the UN where all countries participate on an equal footing;
- Tackling illicit capital flight, corporate tax evasion and avoidance
- Promoting publically available country-by-country financial reporting standards.
- The cancellation of debt for developing countries that carry an unsustainable debt burden, including the cancellation of "illegitimate debts".

**5) *All parties should set the reduction of inequality as a policy goal both within Ireland and globally.*** Economic inequality underpins poverty. It also maintains and reinforces inequalities in many other areas of life. Any vision of the future of Ireland must address issues such as tax, trade and power imbalances.

This means:

- Systematically testing all policy proposals and budgets for the impact they will have in terms of reducing or increasing inequality within and among societies both in Ireland and internationally;
- Ensuring that Ireland's tax policies do not contribute to tax avoidance at home or in developing countries;
- Introduce mandatory Human Rights due diligence for state-owned companies. This would require all state-owned companies and agencies, in particular those with a significant overseas presence to demonstrate the highest possible attention to human rights through their policy statements, human rights due diligence and remedial processes, thus providing a leading example to other Irish businesses.

**6) All parties must commit to speak out in the EU and WTO in favour of international trade rules that prioritise poverty eradication and sustainable development.** Ireland must seek to remove undue pressure on developing countries to liberalise and deregulate their economies in the financial, industrial, agricultural or wider service sectors. They must also commit to enhancing Ireland's support for fair trade, producers' access to EU markets and "Aid for Trade" initiatives that are coherent with development and human rights objectives.

This means:

- Human rights concerns must be at the fore when conducting bilateral and multilateral negotiations;
- Ireland's position in the Doha Round negotiations should be coherent with development objectives;
- Ireland should work within the EU to review EU trade-related policy with regard to impact on human rights.

## Peace

Ireland's history has illustrated the crucial importance of peace and security as pre-requisites for sustainable development. Similarly, evidence internationally shows that states experiencing conflict and violence are lagging behind in human and economic development. This submission is being made at a time when the humanitarian crisis facing the world is the greatest since World War II in its scale and its complexity. Ireland's own future and the full realisation of people's human rights are fundamentally dependent on our ability to promote peace and security everywhere.

**Recommendation:**

- 7) All parties must commit to the promotion of peace and security with a view to improving the lives of all people.** This requires the focusing of efforts not merely on protecting citizens from threats, but looking for ways to allow people everywhere to thrive and to ensure the protection and active fulfilment of human rights everywhere. This includes ensuring that women, community leaders and human rights defenders are included in processes to achieve peace, reconciliation and justice.
- 8) All parties must strengthen Ireland's standing as a humanitarian donor by ensuring that humanitarian principles are enshrined in policy and practice** at home and abroad. Ireland must strive to be a strong advocate at EU level for principled overseas development and humanitarian assistance. This includes promoting the poverty focus of EU aid and defending the current OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for legitimate overseas aid.
- 9) All parties should commit to robust engagement with the Women, Peace and Security agenda** and the empowered participation of women, recognising the adverse effect of conflict

on women and girls, as well as their critical role in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace-building and governance.

## Partnership

Ireland has long been committed to international cooperation and global solidarity. Our experience as a nation has been that lasting change can only be achieved through active partnership of a broad range of actors, based on mutual respect and complementary roles.

### Recommendation:

**10) All parties should commit to taking measures to ensure a whole-of-government approach to global issues.** Such an approach calls for a coherent analysis of all Government policies affecting developing countries and for clear mechanisms to detect and remedy inconsistencies or undesirable consequences of domestic policies on global poverty and inequality.

This means:

- Systematically assessing all policy proposals and budgets for their potential impact on human rights and human development processes in other countries;
- Examining on a consistent basis progress of priority issues via the European Development Committee and other mechanisms;

**11) All parties should commit to strengthen Oireachtas scrutiny of Ireland's development and humanitarian actions** across the developing world, in the interests of transparency, consistency and effectiveness and in recognition of the fact that overseas development is a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy.