

Dochas Submission to Party Manifestos – Election 2011

Ireland in the World

January 2011

As the election approaches, people across Ireland are calling for change, leadership and a vision for the future of the country. There is a palpable desire to rebuild our economy, renew our society and restore our reputation internationally.

The next Government will be taking up the task of setting the country on a new course. Part of that work is to re-examine our role in the wider world, the contribution we can make as a responsible member of the global community and those areas where our values, vision and enlightened self-interest converge.

Ireland's reputation across the globe in the area of international development and humanitarian assistance is remarkable. This small nation has a history and reputation as a country that has cared for the very poorest of our world over many years through the work of our missionaries, our aid agencies and our government programme. Historically, publicly and politically, our partnership with the developing world runs deep.

This partnership reflects the best of what we are as a nation and translates values such as human dignity, equality and partnership into practical action, improving the lives of millions of people across the developing world. Overseas development and humanitarian assistance are at the heart of our foreign policy, demonstrating a desire to engage with the wider world in ways that promote peace, development, prosperity and justice.

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.

Ireland's work in overseas development and humanitarian assistance has contributed to this country's credibility, influence and leverage on the world stage. In setting out a new vision for Ireland and re-imaging our role in the world, it is strategically important to set development and humanitarian assistance at the heart of that vision.

Dóchas calls on [party] to commit in its Manifesto to:

1. Introduce **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 2015. This legislation will give legal expression to the values and principles that guide Ireland's ODA programme, and will enhance the predictability, accountability and impact of Irish aid.
2. Undertake a comprehensive **review of the implementation of the 2006 White Paper** on Irish Aid in order to build on its successes, address its short-comings and formulate clear objectives for Ireland's Development Programme under a 2020 Strategy. This strategy could describe how Ireland will accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ensure effective responses to humanitarian crises. It could also describe the role that Ireland will play in shaping the international framework for poverty eradication beyond 2015.
3. Review Ireland's aid programme to ensure it reflects, protects and fulfils our obligations under **human rights** treaties and conventions. Ireland's development policies and practice should be based on an explicit **rights-based approach** towards global development, focusing on ending discrimination and inequalities, and empowering the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups, including women and people with disabilities.
4. Strengthen Ireland's standing as a humanitarian donor by ensuring that humanitarian principles are enshrined in policy and practice at home and abroad, and by reporting on Ireland's implementation of the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**.
5. Report regularly and specifically on the implementation and impact of the Hunger Task Force recommendations – including the commitment to spend 20% of Ireland's ODA on actions to **alleviate and eradicate hunger**, as well as Ireland's commitment to spend at least €100 million of ODA each year on HIV & AIDS and other communicable diseases.
6. Sign up to a fair and safe international **climate** deal, meet Ireland's adaptation financing commitments ensuring our contributions are entirely additional to our 0.7% by 2015 ODA commitments and pass national legislation on climate change. Climate change is already having a devastating impact on vulnerable people living in poverty and they will continue to be hit first and worst by climate change, a problem they did not create.
7. Advocate in EU and WTO fora for **international trade rules** that prioritise poverty eradication and sustainable development. Seek to remove undue pressure on developing countries to liberalise and deregulate their economies in the financial, industrial, agricultural or wider service sectors. Enhance 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.

8. In addition to meeting Ireland's ODA commitments, increase the resources available to achieve the MDGs by supporting enhanced **Financing for Development**. This should include: strengthening tax collection capacities; tackling illicit capital flight, particularly, corporate tax evasion and avoidance and promoting country-by-country financial reporting standards. Ireland should also support the cancellation of debt for developing countries that carry an unsustainable debt burden, including the cancellation of 'illegitimate debts'.
9. Devise a time-bound and ambitious national action plan for achieving **Policy Coherence for Development** (PCD) in order to redress Irish policies that are damaging to the world's poorest countries. Prioritise, within that action plan, hunger-related aspects of PCD including agriculture, trade, fisheries and the environment, and the ending of damaging policy conditions of international financial institutions applied by the World Bank and IMF of which Ireland is a member. Ireland should also advance the Lisbon Treaty commitment that EU policies should not undermine the aims and objectives of EU development cooperation.
10. Be a **strong advocate at EU level** for principled overseas development and humanitarian assistance. Promote the poverty- and MDG-focus of EU aid, secure the necessary funding and defend the current OECD-DAC criteria for legitimate overseas aid. As the External Action Service evolves, ensure that all political and institutional arrangements respect and fully support the eradication of poverty as the principle objective of the EU's relations with developing countries, as confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty.
11. Strengthen **Oireachtas scrutiny** of Ireland's development and humanitarian actions across the developing world, in the interests of transparency, predictability and effectiveness and in recognition of the fact that overseas development is a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy.
12. Develop **Guidelines on allocation of Irish ODA** through differing channels and modalities. These should provide for an appropriate balance across bi-lateral and multi-lateral spending, and strategic support to civil society in the context of Irish Aid's Civil Society Policy.
13. Ensure the continued and sustained quality of the Irish Aid programme, by guaranteeing **sufficient human resources and management capacity**, reversing the relocation of Irish Aid to Limerick, and by building the programme on a strong commitment to learning and managing for results. The key criterion must be that Ireland's overseas development programme brings sustainable and positive outcomes for poor, vulnerable and marginalised women and men.