

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS RELEASE

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Irish NGOs urge the Tánaiste to defend EU overseas aid budget in EU negotiations

Bill Gates' visit focuses on Ireland's reputation in helping the world's poor and marginalised people

Irish development NGOs urged the Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore TD, who spoke today at an Oireachtas Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee meeting, to defend the EU's overseas aid budget.

They highlighted that, as current EU President, this is Ireland's opportunity to broker a strong agreement that puts the promotion of global peace and prosperity at the heart of what the EU does.

Commenting on this, Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the Irish Association of Development NGOs, said,

"The Irish EU Presidency has rightly chosen to highlight Ireland's highly respected international role in overseas aid. Bill Gates is not in Ireland today to talk about computers, he's here to talk to the Irish Government about solving some of the most pressing development issues in the world such as HIV & AIDS. Yet, when it comes to the hard-nosed business of negotiating budgets, the Government is in danger of focusing only on the budgets for the CAP and the Regional Funds when we should be future-proofing the EU in the context of the global challenges we're facing."

On 7-8th February, European leaders will meet in Brussels to seek a deal on the EU's seven-year budget (termed "Multi-Annual Financial Framework", or MFF). A first round of talks among EU leaders ended without agreement in November when plans to cut the EU's €1 trillion budget failed to get agreement. This compromise saw modest cuts to farm subsidies and regional aid spending, but a 13% cut to the EU's foreign policy budget including an 11% cut to the EU's overseas aid budget.

"Despite already being €47 billion short in aid promised to developing countries, EU leaders seem intent on reducing the EU's investment in global stability, human rights and overseas aid – even though EU overseas aid has been shown to be effective, and popular among EU citizens," continued Zomer.

"Most worryingly, there is very little public debate about the MFF negotiations. And particularly in Ireland, the country charged with brokering agreement on the priorities, there should be a great deal more awareness of the issues at stake," he continued.

All EU aid donors have collectively committed to individually spend 0.7% of their national wealth on overseas aid by 2015. While some EU members have already reached this target, many are set to miss this target, including Ireland.

“We want to remind Europe that it cannot play a leading role in the global arena without a strong budget for ‘external action’. And our leaders need reminding that the prosperity of all Europe’s citizens depends on global stability and peaceful international cooperation,” continued Zomer.

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Contacts

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Notes to editors

- For more information on the Medium-Term Financial Framework, see our FAQ ‘What you should know about the EU Budget 2014-2020’ online at: http://dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/EU_Budget_2014-2020_Briefing_For_D%C3%B3chas_Members.pdf
- Act Now on 2015 is the Dóchas campaign to keep Ireland’s promise on the Irish aid budget – more information about the campaign is available at www.actnow2015.ie
- Further information on EU aid commitments can be found in the CONCORD ‘Aid Watch Report 2012’ (<http://aidwatch.concordeurope.org/>). CONCORD is the EU-level umbrella body representing development NGOs in Europe.
- **Dochas** is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 43 member organisations, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

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