



SUBMISSION TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON THE REVIEW OF IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

The following is the submission by Gorta and Self Help Africa to the 2014 Review of Irish Foreign Policy being conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In it we have selected specific issues amongst those indicated in the call for submissions, particularly those to which we feel we can best contribute.

Both Gorta and Self Help Africa have a longstanding tradition of working with smallholder farmers in Africa, in an effort to eradicate hunger and poverty and actively contribute to the creation of growth and wellbeing. It is our belief that the Irish Government has a key role to play in policy influencing at international level and a unique opportunity to do so by capitalising on its demonstrated leadership in areas such as that of hunger eradication.

We very much welcome the opportunity of this engagement and believe in the value of a multi-sectoral dialogue to inform the Department's future direction in the context of constantly changing national, European and international dynamics.

We are happy to authorise the release of all or part of this submission and its publication on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

1. PROMOTING OUR VALUES AND INTERESTS

How should Ireland's values and interests be promoted through its foreign policy?

In the context of the identified Foreign Affairs' focus for the period 2011-2014 on "*economic renewal through the promotion of sustainable growth and investment*", we would strongly concur with the statement made by An Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore, TD, in the Introduction to DFAT Statement of Strategy: "*the global economic crisis must not deflect us from our traditional values and role in the world*".

We believe that Ireland's long tradition of support for values such as those of active multilateralism, democracy and human rights, commitment to peace support and conflict resolution efforts, sustainable human development and the fight against hunger and poverty, should remain the foundation of its foreign affairs policy. The growing focus on trade and investment should be accompanied by a clear intent to promote equality, justice and social inclusion. These values are central to Ireland's international reputation and political and diplomatic standing.

In this context, we believe that Ireland's core values and strategic interests could be promoted by:

- A continued and effective engagement within the EU with particular emphasis on its development policy coherence agenda.
- An active participation in international policy formulation fora, particularly within the UN (i.e. the Committee on World Food Security -CFS) where the debate is currently specifically focussing on the role of business and trade in development and the contribution of public/private partnership within it.
- A pro-active engagement with different actors and interest groups via new dynamic partnership models.
- The championing of a new development model based on scientific research, development and business.

As a small state with limited resources and influence, on which international issues should Ireland focus?

Ireland should focus on those international issues where it has demonstrated leadership, technical ability and influence. These include: ***hunger and poverty eradication***, maternal and child nutrition, HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, governance and human rights.

In the foreword to *One World, One Future*, An Tanaista Eamon Gilmore T.D. and Joe Costello T.D. referred to Ireland as a country having "a vibrant knowledge economy and a history of resolving deep-rooted conflict", amongst key elements in defining its aid programme.

Particular attention should be given to the area of ***business and enterprise development*** as catalysis for growth, employment creation and prosperity - building on Ireland's experience in the development of its agri-food sector and the related internationally commended agricultural research and extension programme.

How should Ireland respond to changes in the international system associated with the emergence of new global partners?

Whilst supporting the creation of an enabling environment for investment, business development and private sector growth, Ireland should ensure the protection of the interests of different groups, and of the most vulnerable in particular. This could be done by effectively regulating and promptly responding to rapidly changing dynamics and spheres of influence. Ireland should maintain coherent positions and practices within different negotiations and fora.

Our foreign policy should contribute to supporting partner countries in developing regions to effectively respond to changing dynamics and build their capacity to compete in new emerging markets while, at the same time, enhancing the resilience of their local food systems.

As a new member of the Human Rights Council, Ireland should advocate within it for an active promotion and protection of human rights in the framework of the emerging new partnerships and dynamic engagement with non-state actors.

Bearing in mind the impact bilateral and international policies can have in developing countries, Ireland should address areas of real and potential conflict between economic interests and a sustainable development agenda via a process of systematic assessment, monitoring and correcting inconsistencies. The Government should renew its commitment to ensuring that the above stated inherent values and overseas development priorities are integrated across all government departments' (Finance, Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Jobs, Environment, Enterprise and Innovation) thinking and positions, and particularly in negotiations relating to the areas of trade, climate change, and security.

Since the adoption by the Irish Government of a Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) framework in 2006 - and the subsequent adoption of PCD as a key commitment by EU Members via the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 - awareness has certainly increased within different Departments; however not much has been achieved in terms of effectively operationalizing this agenda at institutional level and adequately measuring its progress. There is a need to specifically equip and resource a PCD function within all Government Departments and ensure appropriate channels are in place for it to regularly and systematically engage with civil society. The scope of this engagement in the current institutional framework is very limited.

There is a need to review the current role of the Interdepartmental Committee on Development and the support and advisory nature of its mandate. Consideration should be given to extending the present mandate to incorporate quality assurance functions – this would include policy assessment, review and recommendations for action. Clear monitoring indicators would need to be defined and a result based approach applied. In this case, consideration should be given to moving the Committee from the DFA to the Department of the Taoiseach, so as to give it highest political leverage and authority.

The Committee should be better equipped to identify, address and resolve potential conflict among different policy objectives and strategies. A detailed reference framework should be developed, against which to measure policy compliance and compatibility. Parliamentary oversight should also

be considered and implemented through the Minister of State for Trade and Development submitting biennial reports to the Oireachtas.

An annual PCD Forum at EU level could be introduced as a way to showcase different countries' operational models and lessons learned. Efforts should also be made to ensure PCD is a well established priority for policy discussions at UN level, starting with the Committee on World Food Security.

2. EU EXTERNAL RELATIONS

How can we contribute to ensuring that the European Union successfully defends and promotes our global interests?

Based on the success of the 2013 Irish Presidency of the EU and its recognised success in actively contributing to matters relating to jobs, stability and growth, Ireland has now an opportunity to capitalise on these achievements and further strengthen its engagement in Europe with a view to enhancing both its interests within the Union and the Union's influence in global debates.

At a time of constantly changing global dynamics, Ireland needs to ensure that it is well equipped to effectively contribute to the shaping of the EU's response to global issues and chronic interconnected crisis, with emphasis on areas such as migration, climate change, energy, the new role of agriculture in the food security and nutrition paradigm, trade, business development, enterprise development, and resilience.

Ireland's contribution could focus on:

- The development and application of an appropriate regulatory framework for trade and investment with particular attention to private sector engagement.
- The promotion of a rigorous policy coherence development process within the EU.
- The promotion of a regional approach to economic growth based on responsible and ethical investment and business, multilateral dialogue, and transparency.
- The promotion of new and innovative ways for research institutions to engage in policy dialogue at both regional and international level.
- The promotion of a new partnership model between Europe and Africa based on the indications of the Africa Strategy.
- The maintenance of the eradication of poverty and hunger as a development priority for the EU global development agenda.
- An active contribution to the development and implementation of the EU external human rights policies, in full compliance with and in pursuit of the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.
- The assurance that EU internal and external policies and their implementation, including with regard to trade and migration, are fully compliant with human rights standards.

How do we make the best use of Ireland’s mission network to promote our interests in the EU?

Ireland needs to maintain its well established mission network and ensure it effectively engages in the elaboration of increasingly evolving European policies and positions.

Particular attention should be given to:

- Resourcing and equipping missions with the necessary skills to effectively engage in current and upcoming development and political debates.
- Ensuring the mission network continues to adequately engage all Government Departments in the promotion and protection of Ireland’s interests within the EU and as part of the EU on international platforms.
- Actively participating in Ministerial Summits held in Europe on different thematic areas, including the most recent one in Berlin (January 2014) which brought together the Agriculture Ministers of 65 States on the occasion of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture.¹

How do we ensure that a distinct Irish voice is reflected in the EU’s foreign policy?

We believe that Ireland can ensure a distinct voice by maintaining a clear policy focus on areas where it has demonstrated leadership and gained international credibility – the eradication of hunger and the promotion of maternal and child nutrition through the 1000 days initiative, being two of the key priorities.

3. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How best might Ireland deliver on the commitments in ‘One World, One Future’ through a Whole of Government Approach?

The new policy *One World, One Future* clearly affirms Ireland’s commitment to international development and the centrality of international development cooperation to Irish Foreign policy, in terms of both our values and our economic and trading interests.

The policy identifies two key areas of intervention: hunger, fragility and instability, on the one hand, and trade and economic development (guided by the Africa Strategy) on the other.

In this context, the more recent alignment of aid with the fostering of a sustainable economic growth agenda presents both an opportunity and a threat for our international development work. Ireland’s delivery on related specific commitments, particularly in the areas of business and trade, will need to be informed by an effective regulatory framework and clear principles of ethical engagement.

New emerging cross-sectoral partnership will need to promote equality and human rights as a proofing lens through which to assess their compatibility with our traditional values and development priorities.

¹ <http://www.gffa-berlin.de/en>.

As the Africa Strategy will guide new Ireland-Africa trade opportunities, emphasis should be placed on the need to further invest in capacity and capability building at local level, with a view to enhancing development regions' competitiveness in view of greater integration in international markets. In this sense, support for increased domestic resource mobilisation, direct foreign investment, business capacity development, private sector development, and regional cooperation within Africa are key. Additionally, in order for investment to be attractive, profitable and sustainable in development contexts, attention and support should be given to strengthening the legitimacy of local institutions, the functioning of legal, policy and institutional frameworks, efficient and fair tax systems, the fight to end corruption, and the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. Poor infrastructure, poor regulation, knowledge and information gaps and high transaction costs, together with numerous financial challenges, should be addressed as a matter of priority. A conducive business environment is key, making the business operating environment simpler, fairer and more transparent.

With particular reference to *One World, One Future's* main goals:

1. REDUCED HUNGER, STRONGER RESILIENCE

"Our memory of famine informs our values and our solidarity with developing countries" (Foreword by An Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore, T.D. and Joe Costello, T.D., to *One World, One Future*).

The leadership Ireland has shown in maintaining the eradication of poverty and hunger at the top of its overseas development agenda should be upheld.

In order to effectively deliver on the hunger eradication commitment, Ireland should invest in enhanced agriculture productivity, improved nutrition, and the promotion of gainful employment opportunities for income generation and social and economic growth.

Ireland should prioritise investments in agriculture production in a manner that is economic, ecologically and socially sustainable. It should invest in an **efficient, adaptable** and **resilient** agricultural sector which builds on three fundamental and equal pillars: **diversity, sustainability** and **productivity**.

Priority should be given to:

- Promoting the concept of smallholder "family farms" as key drivers of growth and development.
- Investing in production intensification and productivity enhancement at farm level through the promotion of sustainable farming practices and agro-ecological approaches.
- Advancing a sustainable intensification of agriculture agenda, where more efficient use of inputs, increased natural capital the reduction of environmental impact, and strengthening of resilience are key features.
- Working towards building the resilience of local food systems.
- Investing in science and technology, with emphasis on farmer- to- farmer knowledge transfer.

- More actively promoting Ireland's expertise in the areas of agricultural development and food security, agri-business and the knowledge sharing opportunity: promotion of local level innovation.
- Promoting nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions within targeted agricultural programmes.

2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

We believe business development has a key role in achieving economic growth and contributing to defining new innovative approaches to sustainable development. ***Connecting smallholder farmers with commercial supply chains is not just a strategy for agricultural development, it's a route to economic growth as well.***

We believe that private sector engagement is key in identifying and developing innovative responses to new and rising development cooperation challenges. It is essential to further promote the contribution of business and trade to development and growth through transparent and accountable processes. There is a key role for the private sector to play in knowledge and technology transfer which needs to be harnessed.

We would encourage:

- The identification and ***piloting of innovative business development models.***
- The engagement of Irish companies, cooperatives and credit unions, especially with Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The promotion of ***new forms of private-public ethical partnerships.***
- Devising new financial instruments to support the growth of new business opportunities, new forms of capital as key in driving both economic and social development; risk insurance should be factored in.
- Support to capital market development.
- Improvement in corporate, environmental, social and governance standards, and emphasis on integrity and innovation.
- Socially responsible business investments.

3. BETTER GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We believe that better governance and human rights play a critical role in enhancing sustainable development and the resilience of local food systems. As mentioned above, these are also essential factors in the creation of a conducive business environment.

"Hunger is a failure of governance", thus states the Hunger Task Force report. Strengthening governance requires a new emphasis on all ***process-oriented elements of governing*** - the frameworks within which development initiatives take place. In this sense, investment in strengthening the capacity of local institutions, respect for the rule of law, fighting corruption, ensuring justice, inclusion, equality, and supporting the advancement of democratisation, are key.

We encourage:

- Support to the mainstreaming of a rights based approach to foreign policy and external relations, including areas of trade and investment promotion. Particular attention should be

given to the UN Guiding Principles for business and Human Rights. Ireland's current membership to the UN Human Rights Council to inform development cooperation programming.

- Active engagement in ongoing discussions on human rights with emphasis on extra-territorial obligations.
- The ratification of relevant international convention, starting with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- A 'whole Government' commitment to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.
- The commissioning of country programme human rights impact assessment looking at legal, policy and institutional frameworks availing of existing operational methodologies and toolkits, emphasis on related materials developed by FAO Right to Food team <http://www.fao.org/righttofood/en/>.
- Active engagement with Human Rights Rapporteurs and their country missions.
- The inclusion of specific human rights indicators amongst the DAFT indicators of success.
- An active role in EU external human rights policies and compliance with Union's Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.
- Ensuring that all development plans, policies and interventions respect and promote the principles of: participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law. In so doing, refer to soft law documents such as the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Implementation of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security; and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security in the negotiations and adoption of which Ireland played an active role.
- Active engagement with the recently launched Galway platform on Human Rights in Irish Foreign Policy.

How can a commitment to international development be better reflected across Ireland's Foreign Policy?

We believe that while Ireland has committed to a whole Government approach to development, **effective review mechanisms** should be put in place to ensure its implementation across sectors.

In particular:

- An inter-ministerial review mechanism should be established to regularly assess different Departments' understanding and integration of international development priorities in their strategies and programmes.
- Promote cross-ministerial policy initiatives and events to better articulate the pillars of "integrated action" and prioritise with the support of a multi-sectoral advisory network.

Furthermore, the foreign policy review process should clarify the nature, duration and standing of important international development commitments by Ireland, with particular emphasis on: the **achievement of the 0.7% of gross national income to ODA; a spend of at least 20% of ODA on "hunger related spending"**; channelling 30% of development resources through multilateral organizations with funding decisions guided by published performance assessments; spending €100m each year on HIV, AIDS and communicable diseases; and devoting "more resources" to gender equality, disability and development education.

How can Ireland contribute effectively to the negotiations for a new integrated framework for global development post 2015?

The UN has identified the following areas as priority for a post-2015 development agenda: conflict and fragility; education; environmental sustainability; governance; growth and employment; health; hunger, food and nutrition; inequalities; population dynamics; energy; and water. In this context, Ireland needs to build on its recognised strength and profile, and ensure continuous and coherent engagement at national, regional and international level.

Ireland is in a perfect position to be a champion in the development of new innovative development vehicles that bring together science and business in an integrated systems approach.

Ireland should capitalise on its vibrant civil society sector and maintain regular and structured civil society engagement. Ireland's experience in the development of the agri-food sector over the past 50 years should be better utilised in technical and policy contributions at both EU and global level.