



The Irish Association  
of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations

## **OPENING STATEMENT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE**

**6 December 2022**

**Jane Ann McKenna, CEO, Dóchas**

Chairman Flanagan, Deputies and Senators, thank you for the invitation to meet with you today to continue our engagement and update you on the outcomes of COP27. When we met in October you heard harrowing stories from Somalia of the shocking hunger crisis and widespread famine conditions facing millions. As you know, Irish NGOs and their partners are on the ground responding with lifesaving humanitarian aid, but these short-term interventions, although needed and lifesaving, will not solve the root causes of what we are seeing. Indeed, as Minister Brophy spelled out in his contribution to this committee last week, the deadly combination of conflict, a failed global food system and 5 successive failed rainy seasons as a result of climate change have created this catastrophic situation.

When we last spoke, we called for urgent action on a number of fronts, in particular of the need to establish a Loss and Damage Fund. To that end, we warmly welcome the agreement at COP27 to establish such a fund aimed at providing vital financial support to the millions affected by climate change in the global south. In particular we would like to thank Ireland for its leadership during COP on this issue and for the widespread Oireachtas support and engagement prior to and during COP.

This is a landmark moment that has been achieved after years of demands from communities who have been suffering the damaging impacts of the climate crisis, and the injustice of being pushed into debt to pay for a crisis not of their making. Mia Mottley, prime minister of Barbados, urged global leaders at COP27 to realise this fact when she said, “We were the ones whose blood, sweat and tears financed the industrial revolution, are we now to face double jeopardy by having to pay the cost as a result of those greenhouse gases from the industrial revolution? That is fundamentally unfair.”

In practical terms it will take some time before we see the fruits of this fund, but the next steps are that a Transitional Committee will be put in place to establish the fund and the most vulnerable countries need to have their voices and concerns heard in the process. We urge all countries, including Ireland to ensure transparency, accountability, and equity are the core principles of this fund and that funding reaches those countries that need it the most.

In the meantime, there is a growing body of support for the call for not just increased climate finance from wealthy countries, but sweeping financial reform which is needed to implement adaption and mitigation measures across low income countries. We also want to see an increased focus on the

quality, accountability and value of climate finance which should be in the form of grants rather than loans. Less than 2% of climate finance actually reaches smallholder farmers (many of whom are women) on the ground globally.

Here in Ireland, the Climate Action Plan is expected to be published before the end of the year, this will set us on a very necessary path to the target of a reduction in emissions of 51 per cent by 2030. However, globally we need to see our biggest emitting countries implement reduction plans. We must remember that the need for adaptation, and loss and damage funding will continue to grow unless we act now. Greater ambition is needed by every nation.

Today I am joined by Siobhan Curran, Head of Policy and Advocacy with Trocaire and Ross Fitzpatrick, Policy and Advocacy Officer with Christian Aid who both attended COP27 and who will be able to answer any questions you may have. I am also honoured to be joined by Jane Meriwas, Executive Director of the Northern Kenyan organisation, Samburu Women Trust, a woman-led organisation that champions the rights of women and girls in indigenous communities. Jane has been invited to Dublin this week by Oxfam Ireland. In tackling the climate crisis, Jane works to ensure that indigenous women, as custodians of the land with rich knowledge of protecting and preserving our environment, are heard in all decision-making spaces. The voices of those most impacted by climate breakdown, yet least responsible for it are especially important now as we move to implement a loss and damage fund.

I am also delighted to be joined virtually by 15-year-old Shania Ramadhani who participates in World Vision's SAUTI- Youth Project Shania is an active member of her school's environmental club, she attended COP27 and participated in the COP27 Presidency's Youth and Future Generation Day Events. I would especially like to thank Shania for taking a break from her summer holidays to be with us here today, her commitment to educating us on the reality of climate change is unwavering.

Before I hand over to Shania and then Jane, we are asking that you and all Oireachtas members support our calls to action of Ireland:

- To continue to be a champion for the Loss and Damage Finance Facility and to commit initial Loss and Damage finance, that is new and additional finance, as a sign of leadership on the issue
- To champion and promote the inclusion of those furthest behind as the Loss and Damage Fund is established and to ensure the core principles of the fund are that of transparency, accountability, and equity.
- To play our part to move the world on track to 1.5 both with ambitious climate action at home, but also to support developing nations on green development pathways
- Include children, young people and women in all aspects of decision making as we respond to the climate crises
- To continue to grow Ireland's ODA budget in line with our commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2030