



The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

OPENING STATEMENT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

18 April 2023

Jane Ann McKenna, CEO, Dóchas

Chairman Flanagan, Deputies and Senators, thank you for the invitation to meet with you today to brief you on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on why 2023 is such a pivotal year for this agenda. In 2015, all UN member states signed up to Agenda 2030, and with that committed to progressing the 17 Goals and their 130 underlying targets. Today, the SDGs represent the only universally agreed framework for meeting the needs of all. Indeed the Global Goals are deeply interconnected – a lack of progress on one hinders progress on others.

Given our engagement with you in the past year on the global food crisis and in particular on the crisis which has faced many millions in the Horn of Africa, I'm sure you will not be surprised to hear that at this halfway point towards 2030, many African countries are struggling to meet most SDG targets. The catastrophic levels of food security is decimating many countries' ability to even fathom achieving the SDGs. Without deliberate policies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, by 2030, at least 492 million people will be left in extreme poverty.

Dóchas members and their partners have decades of expertise and experience in not only responding to humanitarian crises, but in supporting communities to build their own resilience, address their own development needs and realise their rights. For some communities however, holding onto those development gains is becoming harder and harder. There is an increasing number of crises, escalating humanitarian needs and a lack of adequate funding globally. Aid budgets have become more volatile and stretched amid the crises, compromising investments in long term development and climate transition. Unsustainable debt levels also continue to cripple government efforts to deliver the SDGs with 23 out of 50 sub-Saharan African countries considered to be in or at high risk of debt distress.

This year represents a significant opportunity for Ireland to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development. For the first time in 5 years, Ireland will present a review of its SDG progress to the United Nations at the High Level Political Forum in New York. Ireland is also co-hosting the political declaration for the SDGs which will form a core element of the SDG Summit in September. Ireland is leading the journey towards the achievement of the Goals and has a critical role to play to galvanise energy, optimism and action. As President Biden mentioned in his speech to the Oireachtas last week 'Ireland carries the moral authority with nations around the world'. Now more than ever, we need to use this moral authority.

Indeed, in this pivotal year, this Joint Oireachtas Committee has an opportunity to be a champion for

the SDGs, ensuring that action for sustainable development leaves no one behind and reaches the furthest behind first.

Ireland's own policy 'A Better World' illustrates our commitment to ensuring our overseas aid will continue to be poverty-focused and 100% untied. However, we do not have a clear 'Framework of Action' and monitoring mechanism. This should demonstrate pathways for SDG implementation that reach the furthest behind first, plus a commitment to work with partner countries and safeguard civil society space. A roadmap and timeline detailing how Ireland will meet its commitment to 0.7% is overdue and would be a welcome initiative ahead of this year's SDG Summit in September.

Today I am joined here by Mary Van Lieshout, Deputy CEO with GOAL and Mary Keogh, Advocacy Director with CBM Global Disability Inclusion, both of whom will give you an insight into the global progress against targets, the impact of humanitarian emergencies in delivering upon ambitions. I am also delighted to be joined virtually by Ana Tenorio, Global Director Education with World Vision who will give you an overview of how we are progressing on realising children and young adults' right to education.

With that in mind we ask that you endorse the following asks:

- We ask that Ireland lives up to the commitment of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA that is spent overseas by 2030, and develop a roadmap and timeline as to how this will be achieved.
- To reach the furthest behind - girls and women, people with disabilities, refugees and those who are displaced within their own countries - we must invest in local and women-led organisations that can deliver effective, community led solutions in order to accelerate progress. We must also ensure we have data to track this progress, the lack of data, for example on persons with disabilities makes tracking progress challenging.
- We ask that Ireland continues to increase its climate finance contributions beyond 2025, including financing the Loss and Damage fund. We also ask that Ireland upholds its commitment to a 51% reduction in emissions domestically by 2030 - and closes the implementation gap between ambition and action.
- We urge Ministers McGrath and Donohoe to use their collective influence to push for debt cancellations for Sub Saharan Africa and low-income countries to ease the burden of debt repayments.
- We ask that Ireland uses its unique role as co-chair of the SDG summit, to lead and revitalise global cooperation on the SDGs. This is a significant opportunity for Ireland to communicate our commitment to multilateralism and our shared values of human rights, justice and dignity for all people.