

**Meeting with Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence,
Tuesday, 23 January 2024**

**Opening Statement by Director General,
Development Cooperation and Africa Division, Department of Foreign
Affairs**

Cathaoirleach, Members of the Committee, I welcome this opportunity to discuss *Ireland's 2nd Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States* (SIDS), Ireland's support for climate vulnerable countries and the priorities for our development programme in 2024.

The UN has designated 2024 as International Year for SIDS so this is a timely opportunity to discuss Ireland's new strategy. On Friday, 8 December 2023, the Tánaiste launched *Ireland's 2nd Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States* at the COP28 Summit in Dubai, together with SIDS' leaders and representatives, former President Mary Robinson and Minister Ryan. The strategy reflects the commitment in the Programme for Government to deepen Ireland's relationships with these partners.

Ireland's first Strategy for Partnership with SIDS was launched in 2019 with the objective of establishing a framework to develop our longstanding cooperation with SIDS at the UN, and to support them in managing the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis.

The 2019 strategy led to the establishment of a range of educational and professional exchanges between Ireland and SIDS, increased engagement with regional organisations and climate partners, and significantly wider collaboration with SIDS at international level.

By 2022, most of the commitments in the strategy had been completed or were ongoing, and we began the process of preparing the successor document.

This was important to maintain the momentum in the partnership and to ensure that the partnership reflected recent developments including: Ireland's increased engagement in international climate action; the expansion of our diplomatic network as part of the *Global Ireland* initiative; and the priorities in our strategies for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Asia-Pacific region.

Extensive consultations were undertaken within the Department of Foreign Affairs, across Government Departments, with international partners and, most importantly with SIDS' representatives to the EU, UN and World Bank and those based in London. This enabled us to shape the second strategy around SIDS' priorities and to focus our actions on areas where Ireland can have a real impact.

The strategy is structured around four inter-linked areas: Building our Partnership; Climate and Oceans; Capacity and Advocacy.

Support for the preparation of the SIDS Programme of Action for 2024-2034 is one of the early implementation priorities given its importance for our SIDS partners. At COP28, the Tánaiste announced that Ireland is providing €1 million to support this process, with particular focus on the preparatory consultations and multi-stakeholder participation at the 4th International Conference on SIDS next May, when this document will be finalised.

Following Ireland's appointment as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee for SIDS Partnerships at the UN for 2024-2025, we will be actively involved in conference preparations and mobilising new partnerships to support the implementation of this Programme of Action. This is consistent with our prominent roles in advocating for SIDS priorities at international level.

In relation to capacity-building, we have established new regional partnerships to support adaptation in SIDS and to increase support for small-scale, locally-

led, development projects. We are expanding our educational and professional exchanges and through our Office for the Caribbean, we will be working to enhance our engagement with partners in this region.

Cathaoirleach,

Climate action is central to our relationship with SIDS and reflects the commitment in *A Better World* to focus on those most vulnerable to climate change. Ireland's major areas of climate collaboration with SIDS are in the areas of adaptation, Loss and Damage, and oceans.

A key ask from SIDS has been climate finance for adaptation measures. Climate change adaptation has long been a key focus of Ireland's international climate diplomacy and financing. We want to strengthen our engagement with SIDS on this issue.

SIDS cannot face climate challenges alone. This is a common challenge, and the international community also needs to come up with solutions to address the impact of climate change on those most affected.

As the planet heats up, Ireland continues to place a high priority on protection and restoration of the ocean which is reflected in the second SIDS strategy.

In engaging with SIDS, Ireland works to understand their challenges, and advocates for solutions. We also support a range of partners who tackle various climate challenges with SIDS. I would like to share three examples of this work in 2024:

1. €2 million in support to the **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)**, building on our support to this multilateral fund to support SIDS in enhancing their national and regional capacity to adapt to climate change. Specifically, in the following areas: addressing water stress due to sea-level rise, climate resilience across coastal ecosystems and infrastructure

and in agriculture and food systems. Interventions will also address human security and livelihoods.

2. €1 million will be contributed to the **Systematic Observations Financing Facility** (SOFF) to support the generation and international sharing of basic weather and climate observation. SOFF prioritises support to SIDS and LDCs and has commenced the first phase of its programme in all Pacific and Caribbean SIDS.
3. We will support the NGO **Climate KIC** with €1.5m for innovators and start-ups to scale up climate solutions in SIDS and other developing countries. Through Climate KIC we support adaptation innovation, female entrepreneurship and the sustainable blue economy, particularly in SIDS. We also support Climate KIC's Climate Launchpad, the world's largest green business ideas competition, which through Ireland's support, has now been extended to numerous Pacific Islands.

The agreement at COP on a fund for Loss and Damage was a major development, and one in which Ireland played a vital role, with significant advocacy on the vulnerability of SIDS. In our shared seat, with Germany, on the Loss and Damage Transitional Committee, Ireland worked particularly closely with SIDS in trying to find agreement, and together we proposed a minimum allocation floor for LDCs and SIDS within the Fund, which was agreed. Ireland has announced a major contribution of €25 million to the new Fund.

I should add that students from SIDS have also been benefiting from the Ireland Fellows Programme since 2020, with 16 Fellows currently studying in Ireland. This engagement has been an opportunity for shared learning on the impact of climate change.

Cathaoirleach,

We live in a world of unprecedented global crises. Ireland is playing its part in response, but this is a moment for serious, renewed commitment globally to a more effective multilateral system. Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) will be €2 billion in 2024, including eligible first-year costs for Ukrainian refugees in Ireland. If these costs are excluded, the ODA figure would be just under €1.5 billion, the third year that ODA will exceed €1 billion.

2024 is the 50th anniversary of the Government's aid programme, and the allocation for Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs will be the highest ever, at €776 million. A further €487.3 million is accounted for by the estimated ODA expenditure of other Government Departments and Ireland's share of the allocation to the EU Development Cooperation Budget, which is expected to amount to €350 million.

Of the €60 million in additional financial resources allocated to DCAD, €30 million is specified for international climate finance. In addition to support for SIDS, this will include initiatives in Ethiopia on agroforestry and climate resilient livelihoods in Tigray, in Sierra Leone on energy solutions for poor households and climate smart agriculture practices in Malawi, including cooperation with USAID. We are making significant progress towards meeting the commitment to provide annual funding of at least €225 million in Climate Finance by 2025.

The remaining €30 million increase will be allocated to response to humanitarian crises, prolonged acute food and nutrition insecurity and the impact of the war in Ukraine. Support will be provided to those countries worldwide that are experiencing the destructive global knock-on effects of the conflict and other shocks.

Ireland's development cooperation will continue to have a primary focus on sub-Saharan Africa and Least Developed Countries. Managed through Ireland's Embassy Network across the continent, approximately €160.6 million is

allocated for bilateral support to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, while €16.8 million is allocated to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

To respond effectively and in a timely manner to significant global need, DFA's 2024 allocation for Emergency Response and Humanitarian Assistance is set at €148.7 million, a substantial increase on the €120.7 million allocated in 2023. In the coming year, €100 million will be allocated to predominantly Irish NGOs in support of their long-term development programmes.

I look forward to discussing these and any other issues relating to Ireland's development cooperation with the Joint Committee.