

Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

3rd June 2021

Opening Remarks by Mr. Colm Brophy, T.D., Minister of State for Overseas Development and Diaspora.

Chairman; Members of the Committee

I welcome this opportunity to present the 2021 Estimate for Vote 27: International Co-operation.

Vote 27 funds about two thirds of Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme, better known to the public as Irish Aid. The Vote provides the funding necessary to deliver on the Department's High Level Goal – to work for a more just, secure and sustainable world.

Budget Allocation 2021

For this year, the Government allocated a total of €868 million to Official Development Assistance. This represents a total increase of almost €30 million, or approximately 4%, on the 2020 level. That means that 2021 is the seventh consecutive year in which the Government has increased the overall allocation to the development cooperation programme.

Of this total, €571 million is managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, through Vote 27 – International Co-operation. This is an increase of €20 million, or almost 4%, on last year's allocation.

The remaining estimated €297 million is managed through other Government Departments. By far the largest component of this other element of ODA is Ireland's share of the EU development cooperation budget. The Departments

of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Finance, and Justice and Equality also manage significant elements of Ireland's total ODA.

The 2021 allocation for ODA is yet again a demonstration of the Government's commitment to international development: Ireland's overseas development programme is both an important statement of who we are as a people and a clear reflection of Ireland's values and interests.

The global pandemic we are living through demonstrates that we each have a stake in making this a better world. The Irish Aid programme is an investment in a better, safer and more sustainable world. It provides Ireland with an opportunity to expand our influence and strengthen our partnerships, today and for tomorrow.

Pathway to 0.7%

In the Our Shared Future Programme for Government, we committed to making incremental, sustainable progress towards achieving the UN target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA by 2030.

Sustained, managed increments in ODA will be required to deliver on this commitment. Careful planning and consultation with other Government Departments and stakeholders will also be needed to ensure it is done effectively.

We are adopting a steady and phased approach, taking into consideration the range of demands across Government, and recognising that to deliver on this ambition will mean making difficult choices between competing priorities.

For 2021 based on current estimates for GNI, the ODA / GNI % outturn is projected to outturn at 0.32% - a similar level to 2020, but a significant increase in cash terms.

Ireland's Policy for International Development.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an integral component of Ireland's overall foreign policy and national presence overseas, enabling Ireland to respond to complex human needs and humanitarian crises around the world.

Ireland has built a distinguished track record of responding to global development challenges and delivering a high quality, untied and coherent approach to development cooperation.

A Better World, Ireland's policy for international development, provides the framework for our development cooperation programme in the decade ahead. A whole of government policy, A Better World affirms Ireland's commitment to realising the central pledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reach 'the furthest behind first'. To do so, Ireland focuses our efforts on four policy priorities:

- gender equality
- reducing humanitarian need
- climate action
- and strengthening governance.

The policy also outlines a commitment to intensity work in three clusters of interventions where Ireland has proven expertise - protection, food and people.

Covid pandemic.

As the Covid-19 pandemic is increasing poverty and vulnerability around the world, Ireland will continue to play our part in responding to the needs of those most affected. This year, we will continue to invest in global public health and contribute to global efforts to develop a vaccine and ensure it will be available to people regardless of income or where they are from. We are investing money through Vote 27 and also knowledge: officials in my Department are working with HSE experts to deliver improvements in public health in partner countries in Africa.

OECD DAC Peer Review

In 2020, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) undertook a peer review of Ireland's development cooperation policy, programme and systems.

The Peer Review found that Ireland is a strong development partner, with many areas of excellence. The quality and impact of Ireland's development cooperation programme was found to be high, with Ireland allocating ODA to Least Developed Countries and fragile states, priority partners and sectors. This clear focus enables Ireland to channel our development assistance to where it is needed most, to exercise leadership and make a visible difference.

Conclusion

Chair, Ireland does development well - we have a well-earned reputation for the quality of our aid programme and being highly effective at reaching those in extreme poverty. What we do works, and has real impact. Ireland, and we as Irish people, can be proud of our programme.

Our international development cooperation and humanitarian action, along with our human rights, peacekeeping, disarmament and security policies and

actions, are at the heart of our efforts to create a more secure, stable and inclusive world. It reflects our best interests as well as our values as a people.

I welcome comments and questions from Committee Members.

Thank You