

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁIL, AGUS COSAINT

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, AND DEFENCE

Déardaoin, 16 Samhain 2017

Thursday, 16 November 2017

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 9.30 a.m.

The Joint Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
Seán Barrett,	Ivana Bacik,
Seán Crowe,	Mark Daly.
Tony McLoughlin,	
Darragh O'Brien,	
Maureen O'Sullivan.	

Teachta / Deputy Brendan Smith sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Irish Aid Programme Review: Discussion (Resumed)

Chairman: Apologies have been received from Deputy Noel Grealish and Senator Billy Lawless. In the first part of today's meeting, we will hear from Professor Patrick P. Walsh, professor of international development studies at University College Dublin. I extend to him a warm welcome to today's meeting. The joint committee agreed as part of its work programme for 2017 to review the work of Irish Aid, particularly the overseas development aid programme and the way in which this has been used to date to deliver added value in communities around the world. Meeting Professor Walsh affords the committee an opportunity to hear from an expert in international development and to discuss the Ireland's performance around international development through Irish Aid. The committee proposes to report on its findings to both Dáil and Seanad Éireann.

The format of the meeting will consist of hearing Professor Walsh's opening statement before going into a question and answer session with the members of the committee. Before we begin, I remind members, witnesses and those in the Public Gallery to ensure that their mobile telephones are switched off completely for the duration of the meeting as they cause interference with the recording equipment in the chamber, even when on silent mode.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I now call Professor Walsh to make his opening statement.

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: I thank the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence for the opportunity to discuss Irish Aid. The invitation to someone from a university is very much appreciated. I wish to discuss the role of universities in the Irish Aid programme and development work in Africa. However, I will describe first some context concerning where I am coming from and my experience with the sustainable development goals, SDGs, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is a very good time to review the Irish Aid programme in light of the fact that the development architecture has changed.

I have been working with Professor Jeffrey Sachs in the Earth Institute at Columbia University for well over a decade now. Members will know him as the special adviser to the United Nations Secretary General on the sustainable development goals, but he is also the director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, UNSDSN, on which I am a senior adviser. Members might know some of the products that we have produced lately, like the world happiness report, the SDG dashboard and the SDG academy.

I will outline for the committee a little bit about my background with the SDGs and what is called the post-2015 development agenda. During the period from 2012 to 2014, the UN-

SDSN had a formal mandate from the then UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, to provide academic and scientific input into the post-2015 development agenda. This was just one work plan among many, and by the end of 2014, all of the work plans and inputs gathered from both governmental and non-governmental sources were summarised by the UN Secretary General and presented to Ambassador David Donoghue of Ireland and Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya as input into the negotiations. They were the co-facilitators of the negotiations on the 2030 agenda.

I participated in those negotiations as well, not in a Government capacity but as part of one of the major groups, as they are called, this one representing the scientific and technological community. One of the innovations of that negotiation, about which I will be saying more from an Irish perspective, was the UN major groups. These were made up of women's groups, youth groups, indigenous people, trade unions, local authorities, academics, business people, farmers' groups and so on. They all had a seat at the table. The major groups had 12 seats and the diplomats had 193 seats. However, we were able to speak, submit papers, comment, and attend all meetings. One of my major battles during the whole negotiation was to keep the term "academic" listed as one of the major partnerships or stakeholders that would deliver or implement this agenda.

I would now like to define something which will be a challenge for everybody, including Irish Aid. The duty-bearer for implementing the 2030 agenda is summarised in paragraph 52 of Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

"We the Peoples" are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is "We the Peoples" who are embarking today on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve Governments as well as Parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people.

The idea is that we will not get transformative change in societies, governments, private sector or corporations if all people do not buy into this agenda. People in government, the private sector, universities and civil society must start working together. This is a theme that I will draw on in some of my comments later. Coming from a university background, I would like to see universities playing a much more central role in all of the activities in the development arena of foreign affairs.

As has been mentioned before to this committee, Mr. David Donoghue was a very skilled negotiator. I would say Mr. Noel Dorr contributed to the UN Security Council a good few years ago but Mr. Donoghue's contribution was absolutely massive for Ireland. We cannot understate how skilled and brilliant he was in that arena. He ensured the UN major groups, in other words, civil society, were in the meetings all the way until the end. He carried them with him. He realised the only way this agenda had any hope of getting implemented was if the private sector, local government, civil society and all stakeholders got behind it. It was not just about government but everybody together, unified to deliver this. The partnership would have to be formed at local levels, such as Dublin, for example, or even on the UCD campus, at national and regional levels, like the European Union, and at global levels. This is the duty bearer for the agenda and it is something Irish Aid will have to respond to. There is a new partnership out there that must implement the sustainable development agenda. I have highlighted the enormous contribution of Ambassador Donoghue, particularly his contributions on the Northern Ireland peace process, these intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development goals and his chairing of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. These were honoured

in UCD and we gave him an honorary doctorate in September 2016. Academia is extremely impressed with what he has done for Ireland and the world.

In my brief comments, I want to highlight the role of partnerships in universities. I also want to come at the sustainable development goals agenda in three dimensions. I know we want to focus on Irish Aid but other dimensions are potentially competing elements for finance, resources and policy. The sustainable development goals, unlike the millennium development goals, are universal and indivisible. In this context, universal means that every country must achieve or commit to trying to achieve these goals by 2030. That means Ireland, as well as Kenya or any of our programme countries. They are indivisible in the sense we cannot cherry-pick and we must try to achieve the economic, social, environmental and governance goals. We have to see the linkages between them and try to implement them simultaneously. We cannot just say we will specialise on industrial development, as that is not the spirit of the agenda.

The other big point that will be quite important for the Irish Aid programme is that there is an overarching principle about leaving nobody behind. This could be a very good guide for us in terms of where we want to be with development. This relates to fragile states, the least developed countries and providing aid to those who are left behind, marginal, vulnerable or disadvantaged. This is the place where we can do the most as a small aid programme with focus. I will summarise a paper I have already written for the Royal Irish Academy, called Implementing the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Ireland, in which I make a case for hybrid sustainable development parliamentary committees. Members may read that. The sustainable development goals agenda has implications for Ireland on three interrelated dimensions of the agenda. There are also implications for the financial architecture and everything else in terms of implementation.

It might surprise many when I say this agenda must be implemented at home. We are committed to a voluntary national review at what is called the high-level political forum in July 2018. We must make a report on behalf of the Irish Government to say where we are in terms of implementing the sustainable development goals at home. The other part of that is the more traditional responsibility, which we take on ourselves, of an overseas aid programme. As part of that, Ireland should be stepping up and helping partner countries to implement the UN 2030 agenda. Finally, there is the other dimension, which is a global challenges idea. We are very aware of Paris and the climate deal, and our commitments are binding in that regard. This is just one of several emerging global challenges where we must deal with tax havens, the health of oceans, land degradation and disease. There are many interstate or global challenges, and Ireland will be expected, in partnership with others, to step up and address them.

The millennium development goals were more about getting into least developed or developing countries and helping them to implement a development programme. The sustainable development goals are more global in their reach and they are more universal. We have to do it on the UCD campus, in Dublin, on a national and European level with our developing partners, and at a global level. We are asked to engage on different levels. Of course, this will create tension in terms of the financial architecture or the type of resources we want to commit, as a nation, to these responsibilities or demands.

The Irish Aid section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade looks after overseas development aid, but I have always taken a very hard line on the idea of what should fund such aid. Ireland should commit as soon as possible to the metric of 0.7% of gross national product, GNP. We are already cheating because we do not say gross domestic product and GNP is much lower. To commit to 0.7% of GNP would be to take a leadership role in the world. Norway

has already committed to 1% and other countries are above 1%. We have made the commitment going back decades and we are now going backwards. We are probably at the 0.3% level, although we moved forward in the past. I would nearly have a referendum on this issue. We should have a fiscal contract for social global responsibility, with the Irish committing to 0.7% of GNP, irrespective of our budgets or political cycles. It is not much at 70 cent for every €100.

There are many benefits to making this commitment. The first relates to putting money into the sustainable development goals at home or into security or other issues. That tension would be gone as the money would be for overseas development aid. There would be no more politics or lobbying in that respect. It would also create certainty. With programme countries, whether it is humanitarian assistance or development with bilaterals or multilaterals, we can plan with certainty over five or ten years. The money would be committed and we could do certain things. We are causing chaos with our flipping up and down the level of overseas development aid. More important, when we start shifting the composition of aid and moving money from development to humanitarian assistance before moving it to multilateral elements and coming back again, we are destroying our reputation. We are not stepping up in the way we should. We need to create certainty, have long-term planning, pick partners and stay with them. This will lead to a much more successful programme.

With overseas development, we should embody the principle of leaving nobody behind. Projects, when they involve the private sector and bigger countries, might naturally help middle development countries more and they may not necessarily want to be in fragile states. They may not necessarily want to be in orphanages or deal with mental health or disability matters. A programme aligned to our history and which focuses on the least developed countries, those vulnerable to famines, conflict, disability, mental health and issues relating to women and children, should be our niche. It should be the focus of the 0.7% of GNP.

When we go to these countries, and this includes our non-governmental organisations, we must be open to working in partnership with the private sector. Even in fragile states, we can work with the private sector and governments in the UN system. We can work with local authorities and universities and go into partnerships in these defined areas. There are many successful examples of how that can work. When we are doing humanitarian development work and we define these particular partnerships, whether they are multilateral or bilateral, I would like to see Irish partnerships threaded through the implementation and review of any money we spend. The idea that we send cheques off to the UN system or to some humanitarian crisis and let other partners spend them in places where there is no Irish entity present, whether a person from a university or Government, is not really good enough. I would make sure that we have an Irish presence in those partnerships, all the way down to impact and evaluation level. It is the best way to ensure accountability and buy-in in our society and structures. We should have companies and Government people going out to be part of the multilateral or bilateral partnerships. That could ensure that we are in it and are seeing it, and that we can improve it by being part of it. When we are doing humanitarian development work and we define these particular partnerships, whether they are multilateral or bilateral, I would like to see Irish partnerships threaded through the implementation and review of any money we spend. The idea that we send cheques off to the UN system or to some humanitarian crisis and let other partners spend them in places where there is no Irish entity present, whether a person from a university or Government, is not really good enough. I would make sure that we have an Irish presence in those partnerships, all the way down to impact and evaluation level. It is the best way to ensure accountability and buy-in in our society and structures. We should have companies and Government people going out to be part of the multilateral or bilateral partnerships. That could ensure

that we are in it and are seeing it, and that we can improve it by being part of it.

When we look at the countries where peacekeeping is carried out and where our universities, NGOs, programme countries, and the African section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - who are based in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa - are, they are all in different countries. Different elements of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are staffed, but in different countries. I believe that they should be in the same country. Peacekeepers and development workers can learn and work very well together, and they should be together. This is particularly true if we orientate towards Sudan or Somalia. They should be together. The universities and private companies should also be there, and should be working together. We would then have more cohesion and coherence at home and abroad, and would make accountability easier to achieve. It is a weakness that we are in different countries for different activities.

Those are some of my academic or external views on where Irish Aid should go. It embeds a nice part of the sustainable development goals, SDGs, framework into it. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will take the lead on the implementation of the SDGs in Ireland. It will report to the UN high level political forum in 2018 in the first instance. Some people have argued that environment should take the lead. There are several reasons that is the case. The high level political forum, HLPF, actually replaces the Commission of the Environment, so there is a legacy of having serviced that committee. It has traditionally been serviced by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. In terms of the SDG dashboard that United Nations Social Development Network, UNSDN, did, many of our red flags are on environmental pillars. There are social and economic issues, no doubt, but most of our big weaknesses relate to the environmental pillar.

The EPA and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment can act as a springboard for a whole of Government approach. They are very open to bringing in civil society groups such as Coalition 2030. They are in a good position. UCD have a research contract to work with them on the governance and the indicators for this voluntary national review, but also going forward for implementing the SDGs at home. I am encouraging partnership between parliamentarians, the bureaucratic side of Government, the Departments, the universities and groups like Social Justice Ireland, Environmental Pillar and the Mary Robinson Foundation. They all should be a part of this and help to define the goals, targets, recommendations and pressure for legislative change. I believe Ireland can do very well. I am very supportive of the energy coming from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. I would like to point out that we are under pressure to report globally, but the SDG agenda tells us to implement in our own way, and it very much tells us that we have to be part of a data revolution. For Ireland that means we have to be able to map out all of the economic, social and environmental issues town by town, city by city, with data, and use the best technology available. The CSO could be pivotal to that. It is a new way of doing things, but we can do it.

In the paper I have just put forward for the Royal Irish Academy I asked a basic question. At the high-level political forum stakeholders are in the room with the bureaucrats, and then the leaders arrive. It is Ministers up until 2018 and then every five years it will be leaders. A HLPF-type committee should be able to work here. There is no reason we cannot set up policy committees that should, *ex ante*, incorporate elements of what we call at the UN major groups from civil society, academia and others, which are chaired by the parliamentarians and Senators, and bring good papers and positions with a view to having action taken on these issues. We have examples of this already. The national action plan on women, peace and security 2015

to 2018 group, led by Ms Nora Owens, has people from various departments, universities and society groups. That sort of thing has already happened, but the idea is to formalise it and to really prioritise it. I prefer this to a sustainable development council, for example the climate change or fiscal council. Those are advisory and outside of the issues, not inside. It does not give those parties a seat at the table. It is not really giving them a real chance to set agendas and to actually bring through legislative change.

Where do the resources come from for this? I am very clear that no overseas aid money should be used for any voluntary national review or any actions at all to implement the SDGs at home. This has to come from the mainstream budget. It should come from the Department of the Environment or the Department of Finance. It has nothing to do with official development assistance, ODA. This is about Ireland mainstreaming its economic, social and environmental policies to align with the SDGs. It is nothing to do with overseas development aid and should not take any money from that.

Ironically, if we do this well at home it gives us real leverage so that all of these partnerships can engage overseas, and in the future can engage in these global partnerships. We already had a little bit of this from the Government, where the former Minister for Finance, Deputy Noonan, carried out a spin-over analysis on the possible effects of the Irish tax system on developing economies. The idea is that Ireland, on the issues of ocean health, climate, land and managing security and disease, gets its partnerships into these issues globally. It is a different arena, a different set of committees and a different set of partnerships. It is not overseas development aid as we know it. Again, I would not use any money from ODA, but I certainly would use money from the Department of Finance and others. We are getting very bad press, portrayed as a tax haven around the world at the moment. Some people are calling us the epicentre for global social inequality and environmental degradation, because all of the multinationals, value chains, food systems and pharmaceuticals and others are avoiding taxes. They avoid taxes so that all of the nations of the world cannot build roads, schools and houses all over the world. We need to take our role seriously in dealing with global challenges in partnerships and cannot just ignore the fact that we are perhaps quite negatively involved in something. It is perceived to be that way. Because the SDG agenda operates nationally and globally, including in the developing world, it has different focuses. In terms of sustainable development we need to build a reputation in all of those dimensions. We cannot just say that we have a famine history and a history of missionary work and that we have done well in Africa. That is just one dimension of this agenda. We cannot, on the other side of that, be seen to be creating chaos.

I wanted to highlight the role of universities. UCD is certainly stepping up to the plate in terms of trying to reorient our education and research, innovation, policy outreach and community outreach towards that SDG backdrop. This is largely because one element of our funding, that is to say, the European Commission, has made the framework programme 9 and the sustainable development goals the backdrop for funding of universities. This is important to UCD. It relates to some work that people undertook. One thing Mr. Guterres had on his agenda was a switch in the focus from security to development to prevent future wars. The other thing is to reorientate global finance to the sustainable development goals. This means finance that was supposed to be for universities, for example, should be made SDG-orientated. Finance for equity and pension funds should somehow be made STG-orientated. Finance should be made to be SDG-orientated. Global tax, taxation and public tax should be made SDG-orientated. Those involved will win this agenda if they hone in on the financial focus.

UCD is perfectly capable of orientating towards this agenda without using overseas de-

velopment aid money or anything like that. This is because the college gets its own funding. The college has its own fees and structure and it can engage. However, the college does need funding in another sense. UCD likes to build partnerships with universities in our programme countries. We do this and we are successful at it but we could scale it. It is really important that academics and students start to undertake their scholarship together on joint programmes.

Up to now Irish Aid has had a successful fellowship programme. It is a smaller programme. The idea is to bring civil servants in Africa to do masters degrees in Ireland for a year. Then, we send them back. It should be possible to build capacity in Africa. Those who have participated never really shadowed the Departments here or came to the Dáil. Then, when they went back to Africa they never really stayed with us on our development projects.

The UCD approach is to go up a level. We focus on the training of staff and civil servants in Africa up to PhD level. We have a nice programme under which people come for 12 weeks per year for up to four years. They can get a PhD in any discipline. Our fees are low and we put a great deal of effort into it. The joy of it is to realise that universities in many of the programme countries are part of government and state. In fact, a person who is head of an economics department can be head of finance one year, governor of the bank the following year and then back as head of economics in the university the year after that. They are rather interchangeable. Apart from getting people up to PhD level, the universities can train the masters students of the future, but they are central to policy as well. They are useful in terms of engaging with the Irish Government and our embassies in implementing the programme.

My recommendation is that regardless of the type of education programme in question, no development education money should be spent here. No money should go to United Kingdom universities either, although that is what we are doing. It should all be out in Africa. It should be about getting our universities and everyone out in Africa, doing things in partnership and getting capacity there. That is what the overseas department aid programmes should focus on.

Chairman: Thank you very much, Professor Walsh. There is a good deal of material for consideration. This is one of three meetings of our committee today. Later today, we will meet the ambassadors of Ethiopia and Kenya. We will also meet representatives of the UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, who are on a visit. The context is the British departure from the European Union. Britain has a good record in overseas development aid and reaching the target of 0.7% of GNP. We will raise the issue with the visiting representatives in the afternoon. We know from discussions with various members of the House of Commons and some members of the British Government that they are committed to continuing to co-operate at European Union level in respect of various aid programmes. That is important. When meeting the members of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee we will raise the issues with regard to our island and the difficulties that will emerge for us when Britain leaves the European Union. It is simply one of the many issues on the agenda of the committee today.

Professor Walsh, you have highlighted well the whole area of silo thinking in this country in all endeavours. For far too long, the academic world, the public service and the private sector have not worked together in collaboration or co-operation in the areas where they are needed. I saw that at first-hand in my limited experience of Government. We effected some changes but they are always slow to come about, unfortunately. People go off and do their own thing. There is unnecessary waste of public expenditure and duplication. We do not see the return for the taxpayer that there should be. In that context, universities are not bad at living in a silo world either. Aside from the public service - academics are public servants as well - what co-operation does UCD have with other universities in this country? I recall representatives from

a particular department in UCC making a presentation to the committee some years ago with regard to programmes they were running. I know some of the masters programmes in Maynooth are very much focused on international co-operation. Is there enough synergy between the universities here? Does UCD have co-operation with the British universities in that respect? Will you elaborate, Professor Walsh, on the concern you expressed about funding going to British universities? You mentioned that it should stay here.

Committee members are aware and appreciative of the work of the former ambassador, Mr. David Donoghue in different roles in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My first interaction with him was many years ago when he was on the then Anglo-Irish desk in the Department of Foreign Affairs. He was very much involved in the Northern Ireland talks. He contributed immensely to the progress made on the island. Perhaps we need to bring him back to have his input again with impasse.

Professor Walsh, you made reference to a referendum. Certain leaders in neighbouring islands put a referendum but I do not think they knew the answer although they posed the question. That could create certain difficulties. All committee members would have spoken in the past about getting the message across to the taxpayer about the effectiveness of Irish Aid as well as the extraordinary work and the benefits that accrue from relatively small funding. When there are catastrophes and crises the Irish public respond exceptionally well. All of us, especially those of us who grew up in rural communities, are aware of missionaries, religious and lay, who did such good work in the most deprived communities before our overseas demand programme. There was awareness at local level with regard to that work. We need to create greater awareness before we go for a referendum. The last thing we want is a referendum seeking approval only to have it rejected. I advise caution in that respect unless a great deal of work is done in the meantime. Will you refer to the questions on universities and silo thinking etc.?

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: I am a big fan of the Whitaker-Lemass days. The then Minister had a finance committee made up of Loudon Ryan in Trinity as well as the professors of economics in UCD and Queen's University. With the capital programme and economic policies he was tapping in directly to academia. It was a good time for Ireland in many respects. I am romantic about that. I am in favour of anything in the Dáil or the various Departments that puts infrastructure on what I term our "science-policy interface". All that helps with meetings, feedback and consultation. The idea is not to leave out the scientists and the academics. That is a positive move. We are small and we can do it easily. Indeed, we are doing it now, for example.

Reference was made to co-ordination. I am chairman of the Global Association Master's in Development Practice. We have 40 universities throughout the world, including universities in Colombia, Berkeley, Harvard and Tsinghua. We have one in Dublin. The association includes Lund University and Sciences Po. We have associates in Africa and South America as well.

I will explain what are trying to do. It is akin to what the MBA is to business. We are trying to give professional training to young people in order that they can hit the ground running at high level management either in government, private sector or civil society under the SDG agenda. I am keen for every university in Ireland to have a masters in development practice, just as we have masters degrees in economics or finance. We need professionals in this agenda.

Do we co-ordinate properly? Perhaps we do not. The university presidents have the IUA. The association tries to co-ordinate and there are many different aspects to it. Ronan Murphy has gone from Cork and into a European committee where he is going to try to fight within the European Commission to move the sustainable development goals, SDG, agenda into the main-

stream for university funding etc. We compete at a local level for students at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level, through the points system, but there is much work to do to orient our universities to the SDG agenda and to have them interface properly with the Dáil, Seanad, the private sector and NGOs. We created a scheme called Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe, CAROLINE, with the Irish Research Council. This is for approximately 55 post-doctoral researchers who would work exclusively with universities and NGOs to work better together on implementing SDGs. That is happening in Ireland, which shows a bit of leadership.

There are two challenges. One is that we do not co-ordinate within our own universities and with other universities. There is also the challenge of outreach and better interaction with civil society, Government and the private sector. More important, we should do that in Africa with our partners. There are examples of that happening all the time but it needs to be programmed and more systematic so that it can become something the Irish do well. I gave a keynote speech in Newcastle University and it has the lead on the voluntary national review for the UK for the high-level political forum, HLPF, in 2019. It is in what is called the general assembly. It also has a group, like Coalition 2030, which I think is called SDG coalition and is comprised of civil society groups. It is very keen that Whitehall, together with the civil society groups and a whole-of-Government approach, does something innovative for SDGs and mimics what is in the HLPF in the UN in the UK. This is a great opportunity, irrespective of what is happening with Brexit, to link universities on this global agenda and to work together out in Africa. This is a nice thing that we could do together irrespective of what is happening with the European Union. This is a message I give to them and that they give back to us.

Academia does not have boundaries or border controls. It is one of the most free-moving things one can have although I know it is not easy to get visas for students. In theory, academics and students move very freely between universities and we can use that to address global challenges and work together across our nations and outside Europe. We can work well with the UK's Department for International Trade or UK Aid when we are out in fragile states. That is a nice message in this time when Brexit is happening. Rather than zoning in on the negative things, we can ask what things we can co-operate on irrespective of Brexit. I second the praise of Mr. David Donoghue.

Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan: I thank Professor Walsh for an interesting, challenging presentation. I was struck by his support for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment being the driver. There is irony in that since we are far behind when it comes to meeting our targets. Would he have considered any other Department as the lead? We have been having a debate about bilateral and multilateral aid here. It is good to hear what Professor Walsh says about Ireland's presence in the multilateral area. How does he think we could do that? We see the effect of bilateral aid but we are not sure about the multilateral aid. There are concerns that it is swallowed up in administration and the security agenda. I agree with Professor Walsh about tax havens because it is damaging our reputation. There is also the multinational agenda, which I think we have to be stronger on, as well as corruption we see in governments. That corruption can be for a variety of reasons. It can be deliberate or it can be due to governments not having the capacity to take on multinational companies.

I have a big bugbear with my colleagues about education and how we measure SDGs. It is not just about getting numbers into schools. It has to be about the quality of education that students receive. Perhaps our universities or training colleges might be more involved in that. Some 70 to 80 children come into a school with one teacher, a couple of books between them

and maybe one blackboard. It cannot just be a box-ticking exercise. We spoke with Mr. David Donoghue. If Ireland reaches 0.7% of GNI on the current projected growth rates, we would provide €2.5 billion. We will have a meeting here at the end of November about how we could spend that. We talk about the big picture but there is also the little picture. While people theorise and create policy, other people are starving and dying. We had the opportunity last week, being in Malawi and Mozambique, to see the work of our ambassadors, with ambassador Gerry Cunningham in Malawi and William Carlos in Mozambique. We saw first-hand the benefit of bilateral aid and it was incredible. Once that bilateral aid goes to women, they will do more with it than if it were given to the men.

Chairman: I will call Deputy Darragh O'Brien then ask Professor Walsh to answer.

Deputy Darragh O'Brien: There was a little segue there.

Chairman: Deputy O'Brien can continue on that route.

Deputy Darragh O'Brien: I will not try to follow that. I thank Professor Walsh for his contribution but I missed the very beginning of it. If he covered what I ask about here at the start, I apologise. Professor Walsh's clear message relates to how, in our move towards attaining SDGs, no funding should be taken from the official development assistance, ODA, budget. I agree with that and think this committee should endorse that in a formal way. Professor Walsh made a fair point that we have raised here on numerous occasions. If we ever move back towards attaining the 0.7% goal, we should make a clear distinction between development aid and humanitarian aid, and there has been a move over the last years such that, when there is a humanitarian crisis, the ODA pot is dipped into to pay that out. I do not support that and I think it inhibits our progress.

The Chairman has covered Professor Walsh's idea on a referendum. I get his point. I do not think he was entirely serious about that and we will stay away from that for a moment. We have called for a multi-party, multi-annual approach and a planned way to get to 0.7%. I have said that consistently. For us to do that means that all political parties and representatives must cost that in their budgetary plans. We have a Committee on Budgetary Oversight now that looks forward which parties and Independent groups must commit to. It is easy for me to stand, bang a desk and say we should reach 0.7% but I and my party, Fianna Fáil, for argument's sake, must show how we can do that. Sinn Féin, Labour, and last but not least, Deputy O'Sullivan and Independent groups, must do likewise. There is a mechanism to do that and I generally believe there is a political will to do it. We have to be realistic too. Britain took a big jump forward and it would require us to catch up by approximately €160 million in one year. It is very little in the overall context and I believe the general public is ahead of the Government on this. It has been shown clearly that Irish Aid and our NGOs work, and instead of talking about it, many of our NGOs have assisted in showing us that roadmap and how we can commit to it. I heard a figure from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade saying that we would get to 0.7% by 2030. If it is going to take us ten years to get there, then let us say it and be honest about it, or say that we are not going to reach 0.7%. It is damaging our reputation and credibility.

The point Professor Walsh made about chaos being caused by fluctuation in funding levels is true. I do not want us to undo all the good work that has been done over the generations. It is not just about money but if there is one thing the Oireachtas can do, it is to say what the roadmap is and when it can be done, as well as what it means. If the fiscal space, which is a horrible phrase, is X, every party will have to factor in the substantial increase in overseas development aid, ODA, over the first two or three years to get back on track, but we are failing at that.

I wish to conclude on two matters. I do not know whether I heard Professor Walsh's comment at the start on third country arrangements. This country pays into the EU-Turkish arrangement on dealing with a humanitarian crisis, but we have no oversight of it. Actually, I am not correct to say that we have no oversight, but we do not know how our contribution to that fund is being spent. I cannot get a commitment that none of our money is being spent on security, for example.

Will Professor Walsh comment on the move towards these arrangements? An Afghanistan arrangement on resettling refugees and returning them to Afghanistan that is tied to future aid commitments is a real issue. We could discuss sustainable development goals, SDGs, and 2030 until the cows come home, but if the EU is moving towards these types of arrangement, under which people are sent back to regimes and countries that are not safe, it undermines the process.

Hearing about co-operation between universities and what they can do in our partner countries in the developing world was interesting. That is already happening well at secondary school level. I have seen it with Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship, SAGE. Portmarnock community school in my area won an award for #MapLesotho and did incredible work. That is happening across the country. We need to be able to harness it because I am unsure whether we would know the answer if someone asked what our universities and secondary schools were doing in respect of our aid countries. Many good things are happening but they are not being brought together. Doing that would be important.

I thank Professor Walsh for his interesting contribution. Perhaps he will comment on a couple of my points.

Chairman: Before I invite Professor Walsh to respond, I must go to the Chamber to speak, so I will ask Deputy O'Sullivan to take the Chair. Excuse me.

Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan took the Chair.

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: The Vice Chairman and Deputy O'Brien are worse than me. Each raised ten points.

Deputy Darragh O'Brien: We get a lot of practice.

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: Lest I forget and if it is okay with the Vice Chairman, I will address some of Deputy O'Brien's comments first.

Vice Chairman: Yes.

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: Deputy O'Brien is not staying and I would forget his points otherwise. The Deputy is right, and I want us to be at 0.7% of GNP now. I am in a school of politics and international relations, so I realise that there are political constraints. I believed that I had the public with me, but the Deputy is telling me that it might not be, so I will turn to something else. What the Deputy suggested was good.

To some extent, this answers the question on the environment. When we took action to stop burning coal and get rid of plastic bags, there was disquiet and many political parties were running for cover, but we could always say that it had nothing to do with us and that it was down to a directive of the European Communities or European Commission. The beauty of setting up an inter-party committee - this was the recommendation in my paper - that comprises the whole of Government, its Departments and elements of civil society is that if we can put it out

to the public that the best of the best in the private sector, civil society, academia, government and the Civil Service have sat down together and committed to making a binding recommendation, all of the political parties could just say that they signed up to the committee, its decision had nothing to do with them and they could not roll back on it if the recommendation from that major consultation, like the One World, One Future document, was for 0.7% of GNP. That is another way of being a bit top-down while also being inclusive to a degree. However we do it, we cannot allow what is happening at the moment to continue. The Deputy's suggestion was a good one.

The work done by schools has been great. We are involved to a certain extent. This is where the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment plays a great role in initiatives, such as the green flag programme and so on. That Department is in tune with society. Someone mentioned that its score card was the worst, but the EPA and others involved in this area are smart and they hold engagements with local communities and academia that perhaps other Departments do not. If we need to mobilise and get things done, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment might be the right choice. I know the Taoiseach and the President. They will all row in behind it because they will just say that they are the facilitators and they want to move the situation forward.

UCD has undergraduates, researchers and other academics volunteering overseas. Squaring all of that and examining our engagement in education in Africa is important. However, the point I was trying to make was that, rather than putting money into UK universities or sustainable development programmes in Ireland in order to market the Irish Aid programme, the best way of marketing the programme is to get people in schools in Portmarnock and all around the country and in universities engaging with people in Africa, discussing these issues and implementing measures together as opposed to sending an intermediary to tell people what the story is. That is a major point.

The question on multilateralism refers to the same idea. I am proud of what Irish Aid does. I have seen it in Tanzania. It is creative. When our PhD students graduated from Dar es Salaam University College of Education, DUCE, and so on, the Irish Embassy held the graduation ceremony. For the first time, our senate met in Tanzania and gave out degrees. The graduates' families could attend the event. This is the sort of creativity that these ambassadors have. They know exactly what to do and when to do it. They are outstanding in that regard.

Why do we like bilateral aid? We say that it is not untied, but it is when we focus on the fragile and least developed. While we might address livelihoods and societal issues like education, health, clean water and sanitation, when we focus on those who have been left behind and the most vulnerable and make that our priority, we are locking aid in. I would like our partnerships to work in partnership with them to deliver that.

This does not mean that one cannot bring in the private sector. Many wonderful things are happening, from artificial intelligence to back-up systems. Instead of providing health care through something like the HSE, hospitals or community outlets, systems could, via mobile phones, move towards community workers doing extension work with communities. The private sector would get behind that and finance it. One could have all sorts of wonderful SDG partnerships with that type of focus in the most fragile states.

Both Deputies asked about multilateral aid. We must contribute to the UN, the EU and so on because we are members of certain bodies, but there are parties that are more discretionary. I call them "quangos of the UN system" or "quangos of humanitarian assistance". A part of our

reason for being involved in them is that we do not have the capacity, outreach or scale to work alone, yet we want to respond and to be able to tell the Irish public that we have given a couple of million of euro to tackle something. We might not have a presence or capacity there, but we have partners that allow us to get there. That is comforting and it works.

On the other hand, though, we must recognise something about the SDG agenda. The UN system and humanitarian lines are opening up to partnerships with, for example, universities, parliamentarians and civil society agents. When we see a line taking shape, there is no reason for us not to get involved. The more that we are involved, the more of an impact we will have.

I am with the Deputy. It was a beautiful point to make. We could be cross about this. Regarding Mr. Guterres, the UN used to be about security first and development later. If we put the money that we invest in military and security into development instead, particularly in north Africa, and ensured that that region developed properly, we would mitigate war, future migration and other problems. It is terrible that we let all of that happen and, *ex post*, there may be a migration pressure coming at us that we want another country to take on instead. We pay it to take on the sins of our lack of action on our borders in the past ten, 20 or 30 years. At the same time, we should really respect the care given to refugees in Lebanon. We should really respect Lebanon for what it is doing for Syria. Having money going in there still matters. Should we have a presence there? Yes. Our peacekeepers should have development people, academics and others side by side. If we start to pump money into certain places, we should be asking for a greater presence in them. Perhaps it takes a little time to catch up but we could be a little more strategic in this regard. We should recognise that there is an effort to fix a problem that should have been fixed way up the line.

I agree on not liking to see cheques being written to third parties with no oversight. That is not good.

I have answered some of the questions. The main one asked was on educational access. I know the response does not go down well. There are three levels. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network, SDSN, the group I work with, has an ethics in action programme. I could give the members the minutes. The programme is hosted by the Pontifical Academy and it works with Religions for Peace. It involves representatives of five major religions, the UN system, scientists and civil society people talking about the SDG agenda and the role of ethics. With regard to education, we have seen that the figures on participation at preschool, primary, secondary and university levels are appalling and getting worse. While we might say the second millennium development goal, MDG 2, is great, yielding good rates of attendance and enrolment at primary school, we would, if we were really being honest, acknowledge that completion rates are a disaster. Quality is a problem. My main point is that one can build schools and put money into them but one has to put money into the professional training of the teachers. In this regard, a big mistake is being made. We have St. Patrick's College and Mary Immaculate College. We are brilliant at training teachers, yet when we are in our programme countries, we do not put an effort into forming university partnerships, involving UCD, Marino, the Church of Ireland or others, with a view to training teachers, training them on extension and getting the curriculums up to speed. This is a huge problem.

The final issue on which we focus – this is big for UCD and everywhere else – is that knowledge is not virtue. What one is teaching does not necessarily make the trainees people who will go out into the world and participate for the public good and be sympathetic to humanity, the environment and the places in which we live. This is even a challenge for Ireland now. One of the questions posed by the SDGs is whether, in our civics education and the way we deal with

ethics at both primary and secondary levels, we are training people to work for the public good when they emerge from the school system. As they are paid by the taxpayer, they should be contributing to the community, nation and globe. Are we training people for oil companies or the financial sector? What are we doing? Is our approach correct or not?

Access and quality of education are important but so, too, is the nature of what one is teaching, be it virtue or whatever else one wants to call it. These levels need to be borne in mind. Our teacher training colleges are excellent and would jump at the opportunity to work with similar ones in Tanzania and other countries, in addition to gaining access to the schools. That is the SDG-type partnership. We can use various technologies, the private sector and other things.

Deputy Seán Crowe: Professor Walsh mentioned in his presentation this morning the destruction of Ireland's reputation. He said investing more heavily in and moving towards humanitarian aid is destroying Ireland's international reputation. Perhaps I misunderstood Professor Walsh. Could he expand on that? He said he sees a weakness in Irish Aid's involvement in various projects in various countries. What does he mean by that? Is he saying that if there is a crisis or tragedy owing to a famine, tsunami or earthquake, for example, we should not make money available to the affected country? Is he saying there should be some sort of separation? Is he saying humanitarian funding should be coming from some other source? If so, what is it?

Professor Walsh referred to the importance of universities and schools. He also referred to the importance of travelling to African countries and others. Does he believe it is important to have a two-way process that entails the groups he deals with travelling to Ireland?

South Dublin County Council, my local authority, was involved in a project in Ethiopia. It dealt with water supply, sanitation, waste collection, educational facilities, public realm improvements and so on. It was partly funded by the council and there was also support from Irish Aid. The attitude was that the traffic involved a two-way process, including visits to Ireland. It was said that, as a result of such engagement, friendships were formed and lessons learned on both sides. How important is this?

Irish Aid is involved in budgetary oversight in many countries. In Ireland, budgetary oversight is a new development, involving Opposition parties etc. Does Professor Walsh believe it should not be a matter of Europeans going to Africa or other parts of the world in the belief that we have all the answers? It is important to have a two-way process and for parliamentarians to meet one another.

Professor Walsh referred to people participating in programmes through UCD. In this regard, how important is it to have accommodation for graduates and others coming to UCD? I ask this because of the accommodation crisis. The Institute of Technology Tallaght is involved in a project that involves graduates and undergraduates going to Kenya to work in the slums to gain experience.

Professor Walsh referred to the referendum and the public. It is clear that the public will not give us a blank cheque. Therefore, it is important to have oversight of projects. The difference between bilateral and multilateral arrangements must be considered. EU institution-related overseas development aid expenditure was €188 million. No one has ever appeared before this committee to say where exactly that funding is going. How important is it to have such oversight? It is important for us, as parliamentarians, not only because we are supposed to engage in oversight but also because we have to be able to answer questions in communities on what the money is being spent on. Clearly, we need to know that. How important is oversight to

Professor Walsh?

Professor Walsh mentioned the UN target of 0.7%. A suggestion was made about political parties. How important is it for the Government to have a plan to reach the target? It is all very well for Opposition parties to say they would meet it but surely the most important point is that the Government should have a plan to do so. Up to now, we have not heard it.

Senator Ivana Bacik: Professor Walsh is very welcome. It is good to have him here. I thank him for the very interesting presentation. He will be responding to Deputy Crowe's comment. I did not understand the professor to say what Deputy Crowe implied about humanitarian aid. He may clarify that.

I was very glad to hear Professor Walsh's comments about Mr. David Donoghue, who was before this committee on 19 October and who was superb and really impressive. I absolutely endorse what Professor Walsh said in this regard, as would everyone else.

At our earlier hearings, I asked a representative of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade about the target of 0.7%. His comment was that our ODA spend has increased in absolute terms even while the percentage has not because our economy is growing. The subtext I felt was that there was a resistance to committing to a percentage target. Will the witness comment on how do we answer that if we want to see a multi-budget commitment to reaching that target? How do we deal with that criticism, which is that as our economy is growing the pot of money allocated to this area become bigger and bigger.

With regard to the bilateral versus multilateral Irish direct contribution to aid in the EU, we had a debate on this in previous sessions. I agree with what Professor Walsh and others have said about the visibility of a direct bilateral programme and direct accountability. We need to be careful that we are not seen to be overly critical of the hugely important multilateral programmes run by the EU and the UN and the huge capacity for more effective delivery without duplication when it is done on a transnational basis. Who should we have in here from the EU to speak to us about where that spend is going? Is there an office we can ask as a foreign affairs committee in the same way as we have had officials from our foreign affairs programme and Irish Aid?

It was good to hear the witnesses emphasise the role of universities. There is a great deal going on across all universities, as others have said, with secondary schools and student-led organisations like the SUAS educational development initiative. The Trinity College law school had a long running programme with Rule of Law in southern and eastern Africa. I have been in Tanzania, Botswana and South Africa and have seen how small amounts of money can really impact. How do we co-operate among our universities to ensure no duplication and the most efficient and effective delivery through building up those connections that we have with individual law schools and other universities? How can we co-ordinate that?

What does Professor Walsh think is the big strength of Irish Aid seen from an international perspective? Others have talked about the different ways in which Irish Aid is well regarded but what do we bring specifically, particularly through our bilateral programmes, that is different?

Vice Chairman: I thank Senator Bacik. Professor Walsh has 15 minutes to cover that. When you are talking about the 0.7% target, some people use gross national income, GNI, and some people use gross domestic product, GDP. Which does it refer to?

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: I will address that. What I would say is look at the minutes.

When we were coming into the financial crisis we experienced a huge drop in gross national product, GNP, and GDP. The drop in GNP was greater and was catastrophic. That has the effect of keeping our ranking high on the OECD DAC. Even though the absolute value was dropping - it actually nearly dropped, I am guessing, to €400 million or €350 million - because it was expressed as a percentage of GNI, which is the value of goods and services produced in Ireland, Irish Aid was saying we were still at 0.5% or 0.6% in terms of the target.

Senator Ivana Bacik: Precisely.

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: There was happiness with that metric then. Now, however, when GNI has started to boom, or boomerang back, what is happening is that even though funding has increased to about €600 million, the percentage figure in terms of the 0.7% target has fallen to about 0.3%. That is embarrassing for those concerned because it shows on the league table. In terms of an international perspective, the league table that matters is 0.7% of GNP. At one stage we were up close to 0.8% and former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern made a commitment that we would get there before 2012.

I refer to the money aspect and somebody mentioned that it is increasing to €2.6 billion. When one becomes a €1 billion donor, one is in a different game. One has different partners. If one is a €2 billion donor, particularly with the sustainable development goals, SDGs, then maybe Siemens and other big companies, the big philanthropists and the big equity funds become involved. Then the challenge is not to become overly burdened with administration and accountability issues but to set up partnerships and to trust them and turn that €1 billion impact into a €1 trillion impact. That is what has to be done because a lot of these companies have good oversight, as do universities and other partners. If there is an idea that there has to be a manager of every €1 million of funding then that becomes bureaucratically very difficult. However, if the view is taken that this can be operated more like, say, the Ford Foundation or the Hewlett Packard Foundation and where we are able to take leadership and fund partnerships, particularly Irish partnerships, then a lot can be done.

There is no problem spending money. The levels and composition features need to be watched as this matters to the Department of Finance. In this regard reference was made to shifting the composition of the spread. The moral aspect to the 0.7% target is that if we have a major crisis then it is acceptable to reduce funding from, say, €800 million to €300 million because we needed the savings at home for domestic use. However, now that we have recovered from the financial crash we should increase the funding again. An analogy might be in respect of pay restoration for civil servants. That is why that metric is useful. It is what is called pro-cyclical. When one is poor one does not give but when one is rich one gives more. That was the whole motivation in the 1970s for people signing up to this metric. Does that answer the Senator's question?

Senator Ivana Bacik: Yes.

Professor Patrick P. Walsh: I agree with the point that was made earlier about the EU aspect. When we are doing our PhD programme for staff in Africa we have the chief statistician in the Central Statistics Office in Rwanda involved. He is young and he will come here on a PhD programme in economics, when he will be here for 13 weeks a year. The idea is that he does the course work and gets supervision here. We appoint his head of school in the University of Rwanda to be his supervisor in Africa. We do not charge fees for that. The idea is that when he is here he also visits our CSO. He talks about what it is doing because he is doing metrics for being part of the African Union and it is the same idea as how we changed our statistical

methods when we joined the EU to align ourselves with the European community. They are the same kind of issues.

The committee is right that there has to be a two-way flow. There have to be people working together, whether it is in Africa or here. They will learn from each other and they will contextualise what they want to do. Mobility becomes a bit expensive but what I would argue is that a first contact must involve a meeting to bed down the relationship and what is going to be done. Once people know each other then facilities such as Zoom and Skype play an important role. Then it is possible to start working daily online in today's world or even on the phone. It is so much easier. There has to be some element of contact and then it can go forward. The whole spirit of the STGs is that the universities should partner and do it with their own funds. Local authorities, parliamentarians, NGOS and all stakeholders should do it. The private sector should learn to partner and deliver if that is what it is interested in.

However, the big part of the STGs is the working together element, to join the dots between these players. I mentioned earlier that our peacekeepers are in Lebanon and Syria. Perhaps they should be in Sudan and other such areas. Irish Aid is in Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda while our universities are in South Africa, and Aid for Trade is in Uganda and South Africa. The key element is how we engage with Africa. Even the diaspora, those who live in Ireland, the Irish Africans, are from different countries from where we are programming. That is a mistake in the sense that if we were in a similar area or in similar countries we would get more synergies and we could do more together, interacting humanitarian elements with development, etc.

On the question of Ireland's reputation, I said there are two aspects. Not being on the upper scale of the 0.7% GNP target damages Ireland's reputation on aid. Being down to 0.3% has really not been good enough. The sustainable development agenda is not just about overseas aid but engaging in global challenges. The big examples currently include climate change. The committee has seen this with COP23 etc and its report. Ireland, as a result of burning peat and its land use in intensive agriculture, is a disaster. People now know it is a disaster and it is recorded as such.

With the tax haven issue, particularly with Apple, people are getting very frustrated with multinationals and value chains not paying tax. They are just seeing Ireland as one of the most clever actors in terms of the double-this or triple-that, with people not paying taxes. We cannot afford that reputation. We need to say everybody is headquartered here as a gateway to Europe and we will get them together to support the sustainable development goal project. We want to be an epicentre that drives respect for society and the environment, rather than just driving efficiency on some of the key products out there like mobile phones or computers. We must be careful. We have set IDA Ireland loose. It was brilliant in many ways but now it seems to have autonomy and distance from the Government to be able to negotiate these types of deals, and that is not good enough. There are other sides to Ireland's reputation, not least getting back to the question about Irish Aid. It is hard to sell Ireland. We have Bob Geldof, Mary Robinson and U2 and Bono; we have sold ourselves and our Famine past as caring about famine and the developing world but in this era, when there has been a shift to environmental matters and bigger social inequality matters, we are now getting a reputation on the other side. These are competing stories that are not helping us.

The committee might ask what I think is good about the Irish Aid programme. I come from UCD, which has the legacy of missionaries. Everybody in parliament or every civil servant in Africa would tell me they had an Irish teacher. They know what UCD is and where those

teachers came from. Those days are gone a bit. I learned from this that there is an importance in being there with those people. There is a great thing about going out, setting up a church and staying there. If there is something great about Irish Aid, it is that. There is a long history of being in one part of Tanzania. It is a case of being friends forever and we are staying there. It is where our flag is and we are partners in the delivery of schools, for example. That resonates very strongly. It is not a cheque being helicoptered in and the people do not know who is giving it to them. These people really understand that the Irish are good craic and good friends. They have the ability to really want to chip in and help whatever activity is there, whether it is for a local authority or something else. It is the cornerstone of Irish Aid.

Vice Chairman: I thank Professor Walsh. Those of us who have been to African countries would be very struck by the age of the missionaries. We have met people in their 70s and 80s and they do not want to come home because of the work they are doing and their commitment and loyalty to the people they have served. I thank the witness for coming before the committee; it was most interesting and stimulating. He has certainly given us much food for thought as we continue with the review of Irish Aid.

The joint committee went into private session at 10.55 a.m. and resumed in public session at 11.10 a.m.

Vice Chairman: The second part of our meeting is a discussion with the ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, H.E. Mr. Redwan Hussein Rameto, and the ambassador of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. Mr. Richard Opembe. The purpose of the meeting is to elicit a view of the Irish Aid programme from partner countries which have directly benefitted from the Irish Aid programme and our development programme. The witnesses are very welcome. The format will be that the ambassadors will make opening statements, after which we will have a question and answer session with members.

I remind members, witnesses and those in the Public Gallery to ensure their mobile telephones are switched off completely for the duration of the meeting as they cause interference with the recording equipment, even when on silent mode. This part of the meeting is being broadcast across the various Oireachtas public broadcasting platforms.

Members are reminded of the longstanding parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person or body outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence at the committee. If they are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter to only qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way to make him, her or it identifiable.

Deputy Brendan Smith resumed the Chair at 11.17 a.m.

Chairman: I thank Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan for substituting for me in the Chair. I apologise for my absence which was caused by my being detained in the Dáil Chamber. I ask Ambassador Opembe to make his opening statement.

H.E. Mr. Richard Opembe: I thank the Chairman for inviting me to make a presentation

to the honourable members of the joint committee. I propose to give an account of the Irish Aid development programme in Kenya. Aid makes an important but small contribution to a country's sustainable economic and social development. Irish Aid, for several decades, has been a key player in the provision of aid supported by best practices in ensuring the set objectives of funding granted to participants in its programmes in Africa have had a positive impact on the lives of people and the environment. Various Irish non-governmental organisations have established programmes in Kenya through Irish Aid funding. The commitment of the Irish Government through Irish Aid has been instrumental in Kenya over the years in developing or partnering with different non-governmental organisations, NGOs, to develop programmes that can save lives and ameliorate suffering, not just in the short term but also in the long term.

Debilitating diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis and river blindness have been controlled thanks to targeted development aid efforts. Millions of children in Kenya are alive thanks to the control of measles and other vaccinations. Hundreds of thousands more lives have been saved thanks to international co-operation to fight HIV-AIDS and malaria through Irish Aid funding. In Kenya's case, targeted aid seems to work better in the provision of mosquito nets, vaccines, cash transfers to the poor, education subsidies, education on use of condoms to prevent sexual transmitted diseases, STIs, and urban and rural water provisioning. These seem to achieve their objectives through targeted programmes.

In Kenya, deliberate government policy to direct aid effectively while expanding on other sources of finance has been critical to the positive impact of aid. With even better co-operation between Irish Aid and the government, greater achievements could be realised in chosen areas of assistance.

On future prospects, Irish Aid will continue to achieve its intended purpose. It is important that objectives be narrow and expectations modest. In this context, it is worth noting that the United Nations elected Ireland and Kenya to co-chair the sustainable development goals initiative, which established 17 wide-ranging goals, namely, ending poverty, ending hunger and achieving food security, ensuring healthy lives, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, achieving gender equality, ensuring availability and sustainable water and sanitation for all, ensuring access to affordable reliable energy, promoting inclusive sustainable economic growth, building resilient infrastructure, reducing inequality within and among countries, making cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, targeting urgent action to combat climate change, conserving and sustainably using oceans, seas and marine resources, protecting and restoring ecosystems, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and strengthening the means of implementation, as well as revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development.

Ireland's association with Kenya for over 100 years shows how these sustainable development goals have been addressed. Irish Aid's structured engagement with Kenya has helped elevate our country from a least developed economy to a middle-income economy, according to the World Bank's latest estimates of 2015. Ireland played a role in this process, by harnessing the developmental programmes from the grassroots in rural Kenya, assisting in the provision of education, health and environmental improvement and sustenance. In a small but effective way, the benefits of these interventions are felt across Kenya through an association that spans over a century. Through missionary work carried out in diverse sectors of the nation of Kenya, Ireland remains one of the most respected partners in the national well-being of the Kenyan people and continues to play an integral part in the development objectives of the nation. Some of the organisations and individuals funded by Irish Aid include Concern Worldwide, World Vision,

Trócaire, Christian Aid, Aidlink, Aidspan, Gorta-Self HeIp Africa, Camara, Cara Girls Rescue Centre, Brighter Communities Worldwide, Westport-Aror (Kenya) Partnership and Friends from Ireland. The re-opening of the Embassy of Ireland and appointment of the ambassador in 2014 greatly boosted co-operation between Kenya and Ireland. This has been done through defined objectives and the participation of Irish Aid in funding networking sessions, trade mission visits, participation in programmes such as the Young Scientists Kenya award scheme, which was launched on 15 July 2017 by the cabinet secretary for education with the Irish ambassador and Professor Tony Scott, founder of Young Science and Technology Exhibition (Ireland) in attendance, and which is funded through Irish Aid. The programme is targeted at the secondary school children to incentivise the children to take up leaning of science in school. Engagement with the Business Ireland Kenya, BIK, network group, has helped to grow opportunities between Ireland and Kenya. During his recent visit to Kenya, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Coveney, stated:

Ireland and Kenya have an excellent bilateral relationship built on strong historical ties and people to people links. This positive legacy means that it is natural and easy for Irish and Kenyan people to do business for the mutual benefit of both countries.

It is clear that there are significant opportunities for Ireland and Kenya to increase trade and strengthen business to business relationships, based on sharing expertise in sectors which are hugely important to both countries; such as agriculture, food, health and education. The Irish Embassy in Nairobi is playing a pivotal role, along with the Business Ireland Kenya network and Enterprise Ireland, to seize on these opportunities.

I will give some examples of these opportunities. In agriculture, Teagasc and the Kenya Agricultural Livestock and Research Organization, KALRO, in 2016 signed a memorandum of understanding to further research into finding the best methodology to improve yields in both animal husbandry and crop production. Several researchers have already been trained at the Teagasc facility. In education, several memorandums of understanding have been signed between Dublin Institute of Technology and Kenyatta University, University College Dublin and Pwani University, Maasai Mara University and the University of Limerick, Riara University and Griffith College, Dublin covering a wide and diverse educational program that will benefit students in Kenya and Ireland on commenced student exchange programmes.

In fisheries, a memorandum of understanding was signed recently between the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority and the Marine Institute in Ireland, which will open up the entire programme and will revisit the economic stimulus programme that had been started by the Government of Kenya in both inland and oceanic fisheries research and development of the industry, which has great potential.

Ireland, through Irish Aid, has continually addressed with Kenya the 17 sustainable development goals. The programmes which are being funded adhere to the development goals of provision to Kenyans across the board and in far-flung areas for more than 100 years. As the World Bank has raised Kenya's status to a middle-income economy, development funding could decline but this should not happen. As a regional power house, Kenya plays an important role in the economic and social growth of her neighbours, which, for the most part, continue to receive aid for humanitarian assistance and environmental management including food security. In respect of organisations such as Irish Aid and the many people of good will who give of themselves in humanitarian and voluntary aid and charity work from Ireland, hope is the best strategy. We hope the programmes which have begun will not dissipate as people of good grow old and weary, funding dries up and children, women and men of advanced years have

their dreams shattered. We hope that there will be continued and sustained aid from Irish Aid as Kenya develops.

Kenya continues to make great strides in ensuring the people are the principal beneficiaries of all progress as defined by the Vision 2030 development strategy, the provisions as defined in the 2010 Constitution, the devolved system of governance and the sharing of national resources across all counties. There are 47 counties funded by the national government for grassroots development programmes and projects in the sectors, aimed at growing their potential to improve the people's well-being. It is through this and the recalibration of the economic goals in Kenya, that together with Ireland and Irish Aid, much has been achieved, as I have outlined here and as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Coveney, noted on his visit to Kenya. While in Nairobi last month, the Minister participated in a panel discussion with approximately 30 representatives of Kenyan and Irish businesses representing the Business Ireland Kenya network to discuss opportunities for increasing trade and co-operation between Ireland and Kenya in the coming years, focusing on the education, health care, agrifood and ICT sectors. Together with the Kenyan cabinet secretary for agriculture, livestock and the marine, he launched a new Ireland-Kenya agrifood strategy, which will be delivered through a Team Ireland approach led by the Irish Embassy in Nairobi in close co-operation with Teagasc and Enterprise Ireland. The strategy will support the creation of two new trading opportunities for Irish companies interested in the Kenyan market.

The Minister witnessed the signing of two memoranda of understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in Kenya and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the Marine Institute in Ireland. These agreements relate to the commitment to joint co-operation between Ireland and Kenya in fisheries training, the development of aquaculture and increasing trade in fish and fishery products. The Minister also announced the awarding of grants to three Irish businesses through a joint initiative between Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine called the Africa agri-food development programme. This joint initiative aims to build innovative partnership with Kenyan businesses in agrifood that will yield benefits both for businesses and smallholder farmers.

The Minister witnessed the signature of three business-to-business agreements between Irish and Kenyan companies. These are an agreement between International Potato Marketing based in Donegal and Kevian Kenya which provides for the supply of high yielding varieties of certified potato seed from Ireland that will be made available to Kenyan farmers, an agreement between Griffith College and Riara University which formalises plans for student exchanges and an agreement between Irish company Vitro Software, its local partner Savannah Informatics and Nairobi Hospital. The agreement formalises an agreement for Vitro Software to install and provide support services for computer software at Nairobi Hospital. He also presented computer literacy certificates to clients of the International Computer Driving Licence, ICDL, Africa. ICDL is a fully owned subsidiary of European Computer Driving Licence based in Dublin. He opened the new East Africa offices of MagGrow. MagGrow is an Irish company that has pioneered the development of a magnetic spraying system for the horticulture industry which greatly improves spraying efficiency, cuts costs, reduces water usage and improves consumer safety.

This shows that there is much to be done in continued support and funding of growth oriented and self-sustaining projects and programmes with which both Ireland and Kenya can associate for a further 100 years of cordial, respectful, progressive and beneficial engagement. As

Kenya moves to become an oil exporting nation, thanks to the exploratory prowess of Tullow Oil, we seek guidance in the extractive and construction sectors in this new industry and the ripple effect that will come from it. There is also the meeting on the sustainable development goals that the United Nations are having our two nations co-facilitate. The trade and development arm of Irish Aid will be of huge benefit in areas of education, factoring in the engineering capacities of Ireland and her large worldwide network of experience. Ireland's capacity in renewable energy, environmental preservation, agricultural technical knowledge, health provision, information and communications technology, financial management, to mention but a few, are areas which will require assistance to grow capacity in Kenya. Kenya looks to maintain the well-established engagement with Irish Aid in to new development for the overall benefit of both the Irish and Kenyan people.

I thank the Chairman and members of the committee.

H.E. Mr. Redwan Hussien Rameto: I am honoured and privileged to make a presentation on the account of Irish Aid Ethiopia and thank the Chairman for the invitation. This presentation does not purport to capture all the details of invaluable contributions Irish Aid Ethiopia has been rendering in the past 25 years. For the same reason, I would like to make it clear that only the significant nature of the partnership could be underlined today.

I will begin by highlighting some facts about Ethiopia which concern the nature of the supports we seek. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa which is now known as "troubled one". With a population approaching 105 million, in Africa it is the second largest populous nation next to Nigeria. Ethiopia is a federal republic of nine regional states. A parliamentary system has been embraced for the past couple of decades and a half with a five-year first past the post periodic election. This is currently under negotiation with Ethiopian opposition political parties to try a mix of one that is first past the post and a representational system. It has a bicameral system. The lower house is called the Parliament and the upper house is the House of Federation, where each nationality has a minimum of one seat and continues to add one for every additional million in its population. Therefore, the Ethiopian federal system is based on multicultural pluralism. Such a system empowers the community to be masters of their own destiny and also boosts this kind of development through their efforts.

Ethiopia and Ireland have enjoyed a robust relationship. It is to be recalled that both countries opened their embassies soon after the agreement on diplomatic relations - Ireland in 1994 and Ethiopia in 1995. Several exchanges of visits have been made at various levels of the leadership of both countries. The exchange of visits by leaders of the two nations is worth noting as a testimony of our cordial relationship. Ethiopia took the lead and the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, visited Ireland in 2002. His Excellency Michael D. Higgins also visited Ethiopia in 2014 which further uplifted the co-operation. During this visit three pivotal agreements were signed: one on air transport co-operation, one on the avoidance of double taxation and tax evasion and one on development co-operation for the next 20 years. The current visit by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade will also enrich the robust relationship. Ethiopia has been one of the priority countries and a major recipient of Irish Aid. Ethiopia has always appreciated the nature of Irish Aid as it has not been hedged by a maze of conditionalities. Ireland has also been considered a true friend as it stood with the Ethiopian people through thick and thin. The relationship is based on mutual respect and co-operation. Thus, the nature of Irish Aid is considered a manifestation of such a cordial vibe.

To come to the specifics of the relevance of Irish Aid, it is imperative to touch on the economy of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian economy is largely agrarian. Agriculture is mostly based on

small holding farming where a farmer has on average 0.5 to 1 ha. Apart from the smaller size of the land holdings, productivity was also very much lower. Moreover, besetment of erratic weather makes crop seasons unpredictable. Therefore, to offset the subsistence produce hampered due to the meagre size of land and the freak nature of rain, recourse to water harvesting mechanism has been a matter of no choice. Such undertaking allows farmers produce two to three times a year. It appears approximately every four seasons. There is a rainy season, a season during which the rain comes and goes frequently, and there is a dry season. If we use water harvesting mechanisms, we can produce three times a year. This leads the farmer to produce a surplus which will go to the market and this will bring about betterment for the peasants of Ethiopia.

Despite the fact that it was theoretically believed and practically proved such a mechanism helps farmers to produce surplus, it is not yet widely practised by the majority. Regardless of all the coddling and prodding, it is not yet scaled up as much as the matter calls for, although encouraging trends are currently being witnessed. Hence it still requires aggressive awareness creation and capacity building from the grassroots. The need for Irish Aid comes in here, and Irish Aid is there. It is playing a pivotal role in helping farmers to bring about resilience.

Community health is a variable that can be factored in when the productivity of a community is a subject in question. It is believed that 80% of diseases have to do with personal hygiene and environmental sanitation. The Government of Ethiopia believes that the community and every household could produce its own health. It was therefore with such a profound conviction that the Government of Ethiopia came up with an all-encompassing community health extension strategy where about 40,000 front-line health extension workers are trained and helping the community by going house-to-house. This has been bringing about profound strides forward. The central plank of the strategy is prevention of diseases rather than treatment. Time is crucial and can be instrumental to production and resources which cannot be wasted for treatment in hospital are scarce. Irish Aid is also a partner in such a fundamental health sector development and this is widely appreciated.

Education is another crucial aspect of development. It is both the engine and the result of fighting poverty apart from the fact that it is a development in its own right. Just two and half decades ago access to primary education in Ethiopia was only about 20% and there were only two universities in the entire nation. The country has had formal education for only 100 years. Today, the Millennium Development Goal, MDG, in primary education in Ethiopia has been achieved in breakneck fashion. The number of universities has grown from two to 45 in just a couple of decades. In addition, about 30 million Ethiopians attend schools, which is a stupendous achievement. Alas, a lot remains to be done in secondary education, in particular, and to ensure quality in general.

Overcoming a challenge does not end there as success only poses yet another challenge. Success in creating access to education coupled with the diminished size of land engendered unemployment pressure. Therefore, recourse to off-farm job creation schemes has become vital. Irish Aid also plays a role as a partner in the above solutions that are meant to boost resilience and productivity for the population at grassroots.

Ireland is known for its success in education and its ongoing endeavour to support Ethiopian universities is worth mentioning. Such support could be more fruitful if Irish universities were encouraged to twin with their Ethiopian counterparts with the aim of building institutional capacity and taking a university in its entirety. There are signs of such initiatives by individual universities, a situation which must be encouraged.

Poverty alleviation will not materialise without improving the productivity of a small sized country, improving the health of the population, ensuring access to education and without heavy investment in infrastructure. These are deemed pro-poor sectors to which the bulk of the budget in Ethiopia goes. Irish Aid, as mentioned earlier, plays its fair share in improving agricultural productivity and building resilience. The people of Ireland have also extended their right hand to alleviate the plight of the millions of Ethiopians who struggle to extricate themselves out of the rut at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. I also wish to mention the safety net programme and relief aid.

Ethiopia has made significant strides and has become one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It has enjoyed growth of between 8% and 10% for the past 15 years. It is one of the best performers in human development even though it began from a very low base. Half of the population used to live below the poverty line. In 1996, it was 46% but over 20 years that percentage has been reduced to 23%. Irish Aid has played its fair share in that achievement.

Ethiopia's current performance of rapid economic growth is aimed to continue under a climate resilient green economy. Massive re-forestation and community-based nationwide water catchment treatment is aggressively taking place in all regions. Also, the supply of energy efficient technologies to avoid using more firewood is under implementation. The generation of energy from renewable sources like hydro power, thermal energy and wind energy has become the focus of the government, which has heavily invested in same. I wish to note that Irish Aid has given to energy efficient technology for households

Ethiopia has about 800,000 refugees from south Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. Ethiopia also plays a pivotal role in peacekeeping in the Horn of Africa and Africa at large. I wish to mention the support that Irish Aid provides to refugees and call for it to be broadened. To cut a long story short, it would not be an overstatement to attest that Irish Aid's support is in line with Ethiopia's priority. Irish Aid's successive country strategic plans address and buttress the Ethiopian national successive five-year plans to reduce poverty, alleviate poverty and growth and transformation plans I and II. For the aforementioned reasons Irish Aid contributes positively to the nation's endeavours to bring about a better life for the many poor.

Ethiopia has made commendable strides in the past two decades. Rapid social and economic growth has been registered. Nevertheless, the country is not yet out of the woods given the level of poverty and the dire need to ensure the structured transformation of the economy. Thus, Irish Aid has still a bigger role to play. A continuous support for farmers with smallholdings to boost their productivity remains crucial in this regard.

The support that has begun in potato production in the southern region has proven successful and needs to be broadened. Ireland can also extend its support to help Ethiopia make the best use of its huge but hitherto unproductive livestock. As much as 70% of the Ethiopian population is under the age of 30. Rapid educational access has been a significant success; it is an aspect of human development and poses increasing pressure. Both skilled and semi-skilled labourers need jobs. To rub salt into the wound, land in the central, northern and parts of southern Ethiopia have become too small to be further divided among new generations of family members thus creating a mounting and urgent pressure. Off-farm job creation has become non-elective. It would be much appreciated if Irish Aid could widen its support in this regard.

Universities in Ethiopia could serve as incubation centres for innovative job creation and make use of the growing access to tertiary education. The University College Dublin has began an impressive initiative with Wolaita Sodo University of Ethiopia, which has received EU fund-

ing under the Building Resilience Through Education, BRTE, Horizon 2020. Such partnership needs to be nurtured and scaled up.

Ethiopia has become one of the growing destinations for foreign direct investment. Private sector investment both in manufacturing and agriculture is growing but has not reached its full potential. The missing link is small and medium-sized enterprises that could have broadened the industrial base of the domestic private sector. Therefore, Irish Aid could encourage the Irish private sector to venture into investment and avail of the myriad of joint venture possibilities. Ethiopia has massively invested in special investment zones whereby an investor can rent a shed and start manufacturing without the need to tie up its start-up capital.

In addition to enhancing aid in the ongoing sectors, job creation through private sector engagement would have manyfold advantages. Therefore, the initiative operating in Ireland to enhance trade and investment partnerships with Africa needs to be accentuated. In addition to the Africa-Ireland business forum, it would be more practical if a tailored one could be considered bilaterally. It would mean that business communities in both countries would have opportunities to make acquaintances and form partnerships. The commencement of the frequent Ethiopian Airlines passenger and cargo flight could be considered a colossal augmentation for the venture. It is worth mentioning, in conjunction with such a case, the need for rapid inward and outward travelling by the private sector. The time it takes to secure a visa to come to Ireland for our business community is too long. It would further beef up co-operation if consideration was given to ways to expedite the process.

Finally, I reiterate our appreciation for what Irish Aid and the people of Ireland have done to help Ethiopia. Ethiopia now has the opportunity to conduct business and investment which benefits itself and others. I believe that continuing assistance and the broadening of opportunities is the way forward.

Chairman: I thank both ambassadors for their detailed presentations. They mentioned the success that Irish Aid has had over the years, the challenges that lie ahead and the obvious opportunities for development. I am glad to note the reference that was made to our universities, particularly as Professor Walsh from UCD is still present. It echoes what was said so eloquently by Professor Walsh earlier.

I call on Deputies Darragh O'Brien, Maureen O'Sullivan and Seán Crowe to comment, and in that order.

Deputy Darragh O'Brien: I welcome both of the ambassadors to the meeting. It is a pleasure to have them. I thank them both for outlining in detail the impact that Irish Aid has had in Kenya and Ethiopia and the relationship that Ireland has with both countries.

What was striking in both presentations was the age of the populations and the challenges that will bring. The last ambassador, at the end of his presentation, mentioned the impact a young population has on the sub-division of land holdings. The median age in Ethiopia is just under 18 years of age and in Kenya it is under 20. When one compares that with Ireland, then Ireland is the old man of Europe.

I would like to hear more about what was alluded to at the end of the last presentation. The ambassador mentioned some of the areas on which he would like to see improvement from us. I welcome that he has stated what is positive. He said we should try to improve on the length of time it takes to process visas for the business community here. I see the impact of Ethiopian Air

on connectivity and investment in Ireland because the airport is in my constituency. It is a two-way street between all of our countries. What one or two additional things would the ambassadors like Ireland to focus on in its relationship with Kenya and Ethiopia? Both presentations mentioned the very regular contacts and bilateral diplomatic and parliamentary visits. That is very useful. We cannot say that for many of our partner countries. We can build on that. What do the ambassadors see as the next step and phase in our relationship?

Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan: The ambassadors are very welcome. It was very interesting to hear what they had to say. Some of my questions are common to both. One concerns the political situations in each country, for example, the difficulties surrounding the election in Kenya. I was very struck that in the recent elections in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF, won every single seat. While it must be great for a political party to have no opposition it is not a very healthy situation. Both countries are coping with refugees on top of all the other challenges they face. It would be interesting to hear about their work in that area.

No doubt population is a serious issue and the ambassadors mentioned access to reproductive health measures. Are they accepted or is there opposition to them, for example on ethnic or religious grounds?

I know more about Kenya because I know our ambassador, Vinnie O’Neill, and the work he has been doing to build trade. It is opportune that Ireland launched its human rights and business report yesterday. Sometimes when we are pushing trade we do not consider workers’ rights, the right to decent work and living standards. It is important that we do not lose sight of that in considering trade.

I have been to Nairobi, and have been around the slum areas, as they are called. The people there told me these are their communities; they are not slums. I have seen the work that goes on there and the resilience of the people. They are sometimes threatened with being cleared to make way for development and they are losing their homes and communities.

Can the ambassador from Ethiopia talk about his relationship with Somaliland, as opposed to Somalia? I know it has difficulty getting recognition but it is trying to be a democratic country and its elections passed off peacefully.

Deputy Seán Crowe: Two of the projects from Deputy O’Sullivan’s area were originally in my constituency. I am aware of the Harambee project. The ambassador from Kenya visited the Institute of Technology in Tallaght to talk about that. I think it means in Swahili ‘all pull together’. We are talking about our two countries pulling together and the idea that it is not just one-way traffic but that we work together and pass ideas back and forth. South Dublin County Council ran a project in the Waribi area in Ethiopia. Local authority workers went back and forth and council staff and councillors put part of their income towards funding it. There was that sort of interaction, with people travelling back and forth and learning from each other. There was a lot of positivity about that. People brought back their own stories about the relationship and the friendships that will go on forever and be passed on to others.

Irish Aid is involved in both countries. What are the Kenyan Government’s thoughts on how Irish Aid interacts and works with it, compared with other European aid organisations - for example, Irish Aid is not tied? Both ambassadors spoke about conditionality. How important is that in the context of Irish Aid? Are there any specific areas on which they would like Irish Aid to focus?

I recall the lack of fisheries protection in Tanzania. European trawlers come in and strip the sea of tuna. How important would a partnership approach and greater European funding be in that region?

The World Bank recently classified Kenya as a lower middle income country. It was previously ranked low income. Given the country's increasing income and the growing middle class, how important does the Government feel it is that the wealth is shared?

What is the impact of climate change and the east African food crisis on Kenya? I am interested in the political situation. There have been all sorts of allegations in the media of excessive police force and so on. Are these cases being investigated? It would be important for Irish people to know they are supporting a country that is clear about democracy, and that goes for Ethiopia too.

Are there any specific issues on which Ethiopia would like Irish Aid to focus? Ethiopia has become one of the fastest growing economies, with a growth of 8% to 10% in the past 15 years. That is phenomenal growth. Has the government there been able to use the wealth to tackle inequality? How much is Ethiopia affected by climate change?

There were 880,000 refugees from south Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea in Ethiopia. What support does Ethiopia get from the international community? Do the Ethiopian people support the decision to host these refugees or is there resentment there? It is very important for the stability of the country that the people are on side with that.

There was a state of emergency during protests last year. Has that been lifted? What political reform has been delivered?

Deputy Seán Barrett: I welcome both ambassadors. I am old enough to remember the introduction of free education in this country. That was the one single change that transformed Ireland. The ambassador spoke about smallholdings and large families trying to make a living from an impossible situation. Free education in Ireland allowed the children of those families to move on and get involved in other activities and professions which reduced the dependence on the smallholding. It is only just over 50 years since we introduced free education but it was the single biggest action that brought us forward. Are there any indications in either country that Kenya or Ethiopia is considering a similar move? It may sound expensive but in the long term it is very cheap. Based on my practical experience and my years in politics, no matter who is in government I stress that once the people are educated they will progress very rapidly. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Ireland was a very poor country. It has changed in the space of 50 years and I put that down to free education. Has any consideration been given in either country to taking that step? It is a big step, certainly, but one I believe to be very much worth taking.

Chairman: I thank Deputy Barrett and I join my colleagues here in thanking both witnesses for their detailed presentation on the challenges facing their countries and how important it is that we in Ireland continue to work in partnership with them. I would like to ask H.E. Mr. Openbe how his country is integrating the development goals in Government policy. My second question applies to both witnesses: how do they think Ireland and other countries can assist Ethiopia, Kenya and other countries in the implementation of those goals? It is important that we make progress in every area covered by them.

We are running into a problem with time so I ask both witnesses to deal with the questions as briefly as possible. If they need to communicate with the committee then they might write to

us in the future and this correspondence will be circulated to all committee members.

H.E. Mr. Richard Opembe: I thank the Chairman and the members for their questions, which I will now go through very quickly. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked where Irish Aid will go. It will go towards education, which as Deputy Barrett has ably said, is crucial. In answering this matter I will also address some of the previous questions. Kenya already has a programme of free primary education and is now moving towards free secondary education. We hope that university education will also be free within the next five years. This is a central area in which we would like to see the co-operation of Irish Aid. It is a focal point for the Government that education now become the critical tool to open up all of the other spaces in our country.

With regard to the situation around human rights and refugees, the Kenyan constitution gives great prominence to human rights. In every aspect of the constitution the individual is granted prime importance, be they Kenyan or otherwise. Kenya hosts two major refugee camps, Dadaab and Kakuma, and Irish Aid has played a central role in assisting with them. The current political climate in Kenya is essentially based on the constitution in that we have systems and institutions that can make decisions that are obeyed politically. We have human rights access for any organisation that comes in to provide positive information and guidance to ensure that we can articulate our human rights as per our constitution. With regard to our slums and other poor communities, through our constitution which was promulgated in 2010, we have created 47 counties, each funded by the national Government. It is through this funding that the counties articulate their own development agenda as well as that of the national Government. Almost €60 million per year is given to the counties to allow them become responsible for managing and developing themselves.

In response to Deputy Crowe, the motto "Harambee", or "Let us all pull together", has been a clarion call for Kenya since the 1960s. Education and agriculture come to the fore of the areas in which we would look to Irish Aid to sustain. Agriculture encompasses fisheries and, as I mentioned in my statement, a number of memoranda of understanding have been signed in the fisheries and agricultural sectors. Funding for many of these programmes will have a limiting aspect. No tangible research has been done, for example, to identify what fish stocks we might have in our oceanic space along the Mombassa coast into the Indian Ocean. Our economic stimulus programme built 3,000 ponds around the country for inland fishing and aquaculture purposes, but funding was, and indeed remains a challenge today. It is hoped that now, by virtue of the fact that we have signed several memoranda of understanding in this sector, we can start moving into these areas.

With regard to environmental matters, our environment ministry has increased our forest cover. This was certainly a challenge as parts of Kenya are becoming semi-arid due to deforestation. One of the reasons why we are looking at the set-up of the Dadaab camp, for example, is that the high number of refugees accommodated there is having a negative impact on the environment of the region. The camp is causing the loss of tree cover because most of the trees have been cut down and used for firewood. When one is housing 300,000 to 400,000 people in one space, providing the energy requirement for cooking and so forth becomes a challenge. We hope that Irish Aid will be able to help look at these factors and see how we can best address them.

Police harassment is not something that happens willfully, certainly in so far as we as a Government are concerned. The problems lies in the definition of what people do to have the police stop a situation before it gets out of control. Demonstrations, for example, are actually enshrined in the constitution, meaning citizens can picket or go on strike. In the certain instanc-

es where people take advantage of these situations, however we find hooligans and thieves. People who might have no good will towards expressing themselves start attacking the property of others and the police have to move in to quell the situation before it gets out of hand. The committee may have heard of situations in which entire supermarkets were broken into. That is not an expression but rather an abuse of a right or of a human right.

I return to the question of free education. As I said, since 2010 we have been working towards providing free education up to university level. We are somewhat behind Ireland in this regard but if we follow the same path and receive guidance and assistance from well-wishers like Irish Aid we will then be able to factor in a free education programme that will be sustainable right the way through, meaning that we will have no cutting of links within the funding parameters.

Looking at Government policy around development goals as based on the sustainable goals initiatives, the Government is looking to prioritise four of the total 17 areas involved here. One of these priorities is the access to water and sanitation, irrespective of whether people are living in a slum or otherwise. We are also looking at environmental aspects, because a clean environment will ensure a healthy flow of water which will in turn reduce the spread of disease-causing germs. As I mentioned at the outset, there was a high occurrence of malaria and everything that comes with it. Education will play a key role also, in access to a quality education. It is good to have a free primary or secondary programme or a university programme, but if it is not a quality programme, it becomes a challenge.

How do we increase food security and ensure there is enough food for people to have sufficient nutrition, which is a major challenge in many countries. We are tackling that issue in Kenya and we are examining ways to ensure that by the application of our Vision 2030 we will meet the sustainable goals initiatives that have been set forth. We hope by 2030 to have achieved 90% if not 100% of them.

Chairman: I thank the Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Richard Opembe and I invite H.E. Mr. Redwan Hussien Rameto.

H.E. Mr. Redwan Hussien Rameto: I thank the Chairman. I will address some of the issues which must be seen as a matter of fact.

In regard to the political situation and the number of seats won by the ruling party and also the conditions that could be considered to broaden that space, there are some factors that must be accepted but are not generally understood. If one looks at the Ethiopian political experience, there are about 74 opposition parties in Ethiopia. In one constituency where the contenders could run, there are about 11 or 12 contenders to avoid dropping out above the contender list so that the vote could not be fractured. There are about 12 contenders in one constituency. There is a ruling party EPRDF and there could be about 11 others. Because our system of election is first past the post, then the ruling party gets 49% of the vote, 51% goes to opposition parties, so literally the ruling party lost, technically, but actually the ruling party wins, because the remaining 51% of the vote would be dispersed among 11 other opposition parties. That is not the making of the ruling party but the nature of our fledgling democracy. Ideas and ideals are not yet crystallised. Political parties can be formed in response to the kind of issues which people think is relevant for them. When we progress, many political parties will wither away and the others will consolidate, as has happened in other developing democracies. The present 75 parties may become four or five or even two bigger parties. In any one constituency there are at least 12 contestant parties, so whatever vote the electorate could cast, it would be divided

among the political parties. The ruling party benefits from that advantage.

At the last election, the EPRDF party on aggregation got only about 70% of the votes. There were about 1 million voters and about 700,000 only voted for EPRDF and 300,000 did not vote for it. If one looks at that, they are 546 of seats and EPRDF could have lost four or five seats, but they did not because the remainder of the votes would be divided among the other 11 opposition parties and they would not get an aggregate vote, so that they gain a seat. People could not vote 100% for EPRDF. If one goes to rural areas, this is true in almost all urban areas, but the strong base for the ruling party is in rural areas. When there was not a consensus, the farmers would not vote 100% for the ruling party, but again because of the fractured opposition parties which could not merge their ideas and voting cards so that they can aggregate the vote and take certain seats, That was a fact that we could not correct because of the nature of our emerging democracy.

What are we doing to offset this difficulty? The first past the post election system has no problem with regard to the rights of citizens to vote, but we still we have a gap. Opposition parties, even though they get a vote across the country, would not be able to come into the Parliament. There is a debate and negotiation in Ethiopia to consider a mix. All the votes across the nation could be added up for both the ruling and the Opposition parties and then one will see the percentage share of the vote. A certain percentage would determine the Opposition seats, because this was taking account of the entire vote of the nation, rather than looking at only one constituency. It is democratic because the citizens have cast their vote for the Opposition parties, but there is the disadvantage of the fractured Opposition parties. To offset that difficulty, the mixed system was agreed last week. Some 20% will be for mixed parties, the remaining percentage of the vote will be for those first past the post. The mixed party vote could be tested for a certain period and then I think it would open up the presence of opposition parties in the Parliament.

Regarding the equitability of the Ethiopian growth, when there is rapid economic growth, there is a challenge to keep it equitable. If one looks at the nature of growth, it is based on agriculture and on the smallholding farmer and whatever increment in the economy comes the bulk of the growth comes through the achievement of smallholding farmers. Even though we are saying that productivity is not up to expectation, because there could be 120 quintals per hectares, on average the productivity of one hectare is about 28 quintals, most farmers have reached 18 quintals, and somewhat better ones approached 40 to 50 quintals. If we manage to help all the farmers, we would have about 18 million farmers with land. If their productivity would approach 70 or 80 quintals per hectare we would produce a surplus, some of which could be brought to market. One of things we have to do is to keep on building their capacity so that they can improve their farming practices and use the modern seeds and technologies. If we were to keep on doing that, equitability would remain. The growth in the economy would come from the grassroots, because every income that goes to the household of the peasants is equitable by its nature. If one looks at the GINI coefficient it is about 0.3%; it is one of the most equitable economies that we have. We are facing a challenge We have companies that keeps on growing, the private sector is coming in and some of the private sector companies would have a significant accumulation of resources greater than the average of the grassroots. Then it is being pushed to be skewed to the benefit of the few. The base is broader. Even though we can still have the room to keep it equitable, there is a challenge because of this fast nature.

The other issue is climate resilience, we have a strategy to reach a zero emission in 2030. For that we are trying to afforest the nation widely. The percentage of forestry in Ethiopia was

2% 20 years ago. Now it about 15%. If some of the committee members had a chance to visit Tigray, they would have seen that the majority of the land had become barren, now there has been massive afforestation and water catchment treatments in the past 30 years even before the coming of the ruling party. The barren land has been revitalised and the lost streams are coming. The forest is now coming and the land is being used for cultivation. The nature of the land is changing. That practice is widespread across the nation and the percentage of forest is growing.

The other aspect with regard to manufacturing is that we are focusing on lower emissions industries, particularly agri-industries. With regard to our industrial zones, Hawassa industrial zone, which was commissioned last year, has zero release of waste liquid. Some 99% of that waste can be treated and it does not pollute the environment. Another aspect is energy. We are investing massively in energy, in particular hydropower, thermal energy and wind energy, so we can export to neighbouring countries. We have begun to export to Djibouti and Sudan and we have an agreement with Kenya that energy will go to Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. Therefore, not only Ethiopia but other countries also will use this renewable energy source so they can avoid polluting energy sources. The other aspect I mentioned was that of the energy efficient technologies that can reduce the use of firewood and boost the resilience of the green economy.

Reference was made to Somaliland, which is a tricky issue. There is a hope of exercising some democratic ethos and the whole of Somalia could learn from that exercise and prevent the rifts that could be created through lack of democracy. When it comes to recognition, Ethiopia would act in line with the standards of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD, and the African Union. No other country in Africa would act bilaterally to recognise any part of a certain country. Maintaining the peace and unity of the entirety of Somalia and then helping it to overcome this challenge would be the burden of all Africans. The African Union and IGAD are trying their level best to hold the country together by solving the problems which have been creating a rift between the different societies of Somalia.

There are areas where Ireland could assist us on the way forward. One aspect is to keep helping the farmers to bring about efficiency and to enhance their productivity, which has begun but needs to be boosted. The other point is that land is not the only way. As I said, in some parts of Ethiopia land-holdings have become too small to be sustainably used. As a result, off-farm activities and other sources could be considered, for example, beekeeping and other activities. This process has begun and Irish Aid is helping in this regard. However, this has to be scaled up because only a small number of youths are using these opportunities. The number of youths is very large and the demographic challenge is growing. Unless we use off-farm economic activities, simply tilling the land will not sustain the society, particularly in the central and northern parts of Ethiopia. As it stands, the situation is pretty volatile.

Another issue is job creation through business and investment. Ethiopia is producing raw materials and agricultural products which could be exported. If we enhance this business and trade, first, it would help job creation, and, second, those who produce would get the benefits and would keep on producing because they are selling into the economy, rather than using production just for domestic consumption, and this would enhance their incentive to produce more. If we keep enriching business, trade and investment, this will create jobs and will also incentivise Ethiopian businesses to produce more. What we export now is mainly agricultural produce and only a few foreign investors are coming in, for example, from China and Turkey, and the British are also now there. These investors are interested in the export of certain leather

and textile produce. Until we diversify that, off-farm activities and getting the farmers to produce more are the imperatives.

The issue of free education was raised. In Ethiopia, general education is already free at primary and secondary level. When it comes to tertiary education, there is cost-sharing but the student only pays 15% of the cost and this is paid after graduation. There are also certain holiday years so graduates can settle themselves and buy household items. When their lives stabilise, they pay only 15% of the cost. They do not have to pay before they receive their education but after graduation. To repeat, general education is free and there is cost-sharing for tertiary education, with the student paying 15% only after the education is completed and only after the person has a job and stays in that job a certain number of years. This bolsters primary education because tertiary education is somewhat of a privilege when compared to the millions at the bottom and those who reach the top level have to pay a little of the cost so they can help their compatriots. That is the rationale behind it but they do not have to pay before they get that education.

Chairman: I thank both ambassadors for their valuable contributions, which we will find very beneficial in our consideration and review of Irish Aid. We must now go into private session.

The joint committee went into private session at 12.25 p.m. and adjourned at 12.35 p.m. until 9 a.m. on Thursday, 30 November 2017.