

## **Dochas submission to the development of the Statement of Strategy 2011-2013 of the Department of Foreign Affairs**

December 2010

As part of the consultation process being conducted by Government in connection with the revision of Departmental Strategy Statements, Dochas – the Association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations – submits the following comments aimed at inputting a civil society perspective into the DFA strategy development.

Our comments are based on the awareness that international development cooperation is a central plank of Ireland's foreign policy and in many respects serves as Ireland's calling card to the world. Dochas is convinced that an effective, credible and well-resourced ODA programme is essential if the Department is to fulfil its Mission Statement.

Dochas particularly urges that the DFA strategy document 2011-2013 should progress a predictable, forward-looking ODA budget planning for annual, incremental progress towards Programme for Government targets on the 0.7% ODA/GNI commitment; a human rights-based analysis of Ireland's international development and cooperation; and a reinvigorated DFA focus on, and commitment to, Policy Coherence for Development.

Furthermore, we believe that strategic engagement with civil society organisations, such as envisaged in Irish Aid's Civil Society Policy, is crucial for the attainment of the Department's own goals and objectives.

Dochas considers that the Statement of Strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs (2011-2013) could usefully be used to set out:

- How development cooperation (above and beyond overseas aid, to also include policy coherence for development) is to be approached as a matter of Ireland's foreign policy through the goals, targets, work plans and indicators of the DFA;
- Specific reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and relevant Human Rights Treaties and Conventions, as well as the *White Paper on Irish Aid* and relevant Treaties and Council Conclusions at EU level, as the policy framework for Ireland's development cooperation;
- The development-related, humanitarian and human rights priorities that Ireland will seek to progress during its Presidency of the EU in 2013;
- The basis for predictable, forward-looking ODA budget planning for annual, incremental progress towards the Government and EU commitments to deliver 0.7% ODA/GNI spending by 2015. This would allow Irish Aid, in particular, to plan and maximise predictability in the interests of aid effectiveness, on which it is putting such a strong

emphasis. [*\*See accompanying note submitted to Department of Finance strategy consultation.*]

- An approach to human rights that brings greater focus on respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights, including Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights, – and an analysis of how Ireland’s international development programme, as well as complementary activities and approaches overseas (policy coherence for development, IFI relations and positions, accountability of Irish multinationals, etc) fit within the human rights priorities being advanced by DFA.

This could include how development cooperation (which suffered major cuts within Government Current Expenditure in 2009-2010, but also as a proportion of the DFA departmental budget in 2009-2010) can be safeguarded as a strategic human rights priority within resource allocation/business planning in DFA, and within the Government programme, at a time when certain constituencies may threaten or undermine it;

- How Estimates will link to the Annual Output Statements for DFA – as well as (at least annual) *reporting on progress* against objectives, targets, commitments, outcomes, etc.

In the area of development cooperation, Dóchas urges that these should include at least:

- Annual and three-year (trend) progress towards the Government’s commitment of reaching 0.7% ODA/GNI by 2015;
- Reporting on the Government’s new, high-profile commitment to commit at least 20% of ODA to ‘hunger-related spending’;
- Clarifying and reporting on the Government commitments on spending related to HIV, AIDS and communicable diseases; and
- Annual reporting on Ireland’s contribution to progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

As well as indicating areas of progress, reporting against the Strategy should set out reasons for targets not met or problems encountered. (Guidelines for Departmental strategy development, p25);

- Relevant Cross-Departmental issues (as identified in Guidelines section 4.8) and the best means and mechanisms to ensure they are addressed.

Dóchas suggests that this is particularly relevant to DFA in terms of Policy Coherence for Development, because of the importance of PCD in general terms, recognised in the *White Paper on Irish Aid*; because much of the agenda and energy is coming from the EU, relations with which are a vital part of DFA’s work; and because DFA, through Irish Aid, provides the (under-resourced) secretariat of the Inter-Departmental Committee for Development.

Dóchas would welcome PCD in general, and a particular objective of achieving progress on a small number of substantial cases of incoherence, being given greater focus in the DFA strategy 2011-2013, along with “the arrangements in place to ensure a coordinated approach between them... so that the tracking of cross-departmental issues across Strategy Statements is simplified”, as suggested in the Statement of Strategy Guidelines.

Sufficient DFA prioritisation and resourcing of PCD work (including the IDCD secretariat), and reporting against objectives, strategies, action plans, activities and outcomes on the issue of PCD would be warmly welcomed by development NGOs.

- In the area of data and statistics strategies (referred to in the Guidelines for strategy development), Dóchas highlights the need to focus on and prioritise the gathering of data required to report annually on Ireland's specific development-related commitments, as well as its contribution to progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Data should be disaggregated at least by gender (but also by other important categorisations, as relevant - such as age or disability, for example) for all development cooperation-related programming;
- If or how the DFA can make use of RIAs (or even Development Impact Analysis), to ensure a better basis for enhancing 'whole of Government' policy coherence for development – which is led by the DFA, currently through Irish Aid – as was proposed by the IIS research for ABIA on advancing Ireland's policy coherence for development;
- How the DFA will play its part to ensure that the increasing foreign policy, trade and security ambitions of the EU are kept in balance with development and humanitarian priorities, and additional Policy Coherence for Development considerations in relation to developing countries, as required by the Lisbon Treaty, so that the EU remains true to its core values of peaceful cooperation, human rights and social justice.

This is particularly important in relation to defining the role, mandate, scope, funding and powers of the External Action Service vis a vis DG Development; and specifically how the EAS will relate to EU development cooperation programmes and approaches, so that development budgets and programmes remain focused on poverty eradication and sustainable development, and are not politicised or used for other EU strategic goals.

- How DFA will continue to support and engage in UN reform to promote its central role in relation to international law and security, as well as emerging issues of particular interest to the development community, such as (additional) climate change financing, innovative finance for development initiatives, international taxation and financial reporting standards, etc.
- How stakeholders beyond Government Departments, including Dóchas and its member organisations, can best be involved in development-related processes (such as preparations for and the work of the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011) and in early consultation on the next revision of the Statement of Strategy, as well as other strategic development-related, human security and global justice issues.

In that regard, Dóchas is certainly willing and keen to engage in substantive consultation on development-related policies and programmes that come under the DFA remit, as well as evaluation/revision of the DFA Strategy when it comes up for renewal in the future.