

## Ireland EU Presidency Report Card

### Solid progress on a number of areas but still some unfinished business...

In its March 2012 Manifesto ‘*Promoting a Just World: Irelands EU Council Presidency*’, Trócaire called on the Irish Government to make progress and action in two key areas a hallmark of its EU Presidency (January to July 2013).

These were to develop a successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which addressed both poverty and environmental sustainability, and to ensure a just response to food insecurity and climate change.

The Manifesto also stressed the need for progress on a range of EU policy processes that have significant impacts on global development and poverty eradication, including the EU budget negotiations, humanitarian consensus, tax evasion, and protecting civil society space and human rights.

This review looks at the extent to which the Irish EU Presidency succeeded in progressing on these issues, awards ‘grades’ on this basis, and signposts areas for the Irish government (which is still part of the Ireland-Lithuania and Greece Presidency Trio Programme for the next year), Irish MEPs and candidates up for election/re-election in 2014 to take forward.

As the report card indicates, with one A grade, two B+ grades, and four C grades, overall there has been solid progress on a number of important development issues which were prioritised in the run up to and throughout the Presidency, however there are also some areas where there is more to be done (D and E grades).

### Manifesto Priority 1:

**Ensuring the development of a strong and effective EU position on the future global development framework that places human rights, equity, including gender equality, and sustainable development at its heart**

Grade	Achievements during Presidency	Action Points
<b>B+</b>	<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The Irish Presidency succeeded in making the post-2015 development framework a hallmark of its Presidency</li> <li>✓ Council Conclusions adopted on Post 2015 in May 2013 reference the need for a rights-based approach and build a common EU position for an integrated poverty and sustainability-focused framework</li> </ul> <p><b>ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Conclusions should have made a clear call for strengthened accountability for all countries in meeting their commitments under a post-2015 framework. Lack of accountability has undermined MDG progress and is key to a rights-based approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalise on the credibility of Irish government work on post 2015 framework to influence EU and international debates</li> <li>• Use Ireland’s membership of the UN Human Rights Council to push for a rights-based approach with a strong accountability framework</li> <li>• Reach out to people affected by poverty, inequality and unsustainable development at home, to foster much needed debate on what the post-2015 future should look like</li> </ul>

## Manifesto Priority 2:

### Championing the Right to Food as the basis on which to build national and global responses to climate change and hunger by:

- (i) Ensuring strong Council Conclusions are adopted on implementation plan for the EU's Food Security Policy Framework
- (ii) Publishing a Heads of Bill for an effective Irish climate law and fulfilling commitment to provide €100 million in fast start finance for climate action in developing countries with new/additional resources
- (iii) Achieving Council Conclusions on biofuels, addressing social and environmental sustainability concerns

Grade	Achievements during Presidency	Action Points
<p><b>C</b> <i>(on Council Conclusions on Food &amp; Nutrition Security)</i></p>	<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Presidency co-hosted Hunger, Nutrition and Climate Justice Conference in April 2013 with the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice, WFP and CGIAR bringing grassroots practitioners and policy makers together</li> <li>✓ <b>(i) Food Nutrition and Security:</b> Council Conclusions on Food and Nutrition Security were adopted in May 2013 and these include welcome acknowledgement of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as the foremost inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for food and nutrition security and welcomes the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests</li> <li>✓ <b>(ii) Action on Climate Change:</b> The Government published a Heads of Bill for a Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill in February 2013 (Ireland fulfilled its fast start finance commitments for climate action in developing countries but by reallocating aid spending, not through additional resources)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the key messages of the conference to be acted: "Developed countries need to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and deliver on commitments to provide financing for adaptation"</li> </ul> <p><b>Food Nutrition and Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the CFS process to develop clear guidance for agricultural investments, and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land</li> </ul> <p><b>Climate Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconsider the content of the Climate Action Bill and indicate the Irish Governments serious commitment to mitigating climate change by introducing phased emission reduction targets</li> </ul>
<p><b>D</b> <i>(on Climate Law)</i></p>	<p><b>ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <p><b>(iii) Biofuels:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EC's October 2012 biofuels proposal was given high importance. It was on the agendas of Environment and Industry Councils and the Presidency was proactive in trying to forge a common position. However, this was not achieved. The Presidency resisted giving the lead on biofuels to the Environment Council and pursued agreement via a complicated process. The positions represented a dilution of an already weak Commission proposal. Minister Rabbitte did reference social and environmental dimensions at the final Industry Council</li> <li>• Council conclusions on Food and Nutrition Security do not set out concrete actions to support implementation of CFS guidelines, nor does it reference the ongoing process to develop clear guidance on agricultural investments, or elaborate on delivering on its commitments towards policy coherence</li> <li>• The failure to state emission reduction targets for the period up to 2050 means the draft Climate Action bill falls short in terms of demonstrating Irish leadership on climate change mitigation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Biofuels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is critical that the issue of biofuels remains a priority during the Lithuanian Presidency and that Council position is reached in order for the process to proceed before European Parliament elections in 2014</li> <li>• Since Ireland no longer holds the Presidency, the government should declare its position on the issue. To be coherent with its development programme objective of reducing hunger Ireland should endorse a robust cap to limit the use of land based biofuels and join other proactive EU member states endeavouring to phase out targets for these completely</li> </ul>
<p><b>E</b> <i>(on biofuels)</i></p>		

### Manifesto Priority 3:

**Ensure that a new robust and principled Action Plan of the Humanitarian Consensus, applicable to all Member States, is put in place in 2013**

- (i) Facilitate a review of the Consensus Action Plan during its Presidency of the EU Council
- (ii) Lead by example: Ireland’s humanitarian strategy to fully reflect commitments made in the Consensus

Grade	Achievements during Presidency	Action Points
<p><b>B+</b> <i>(on facilitating the Action Plan review)</i></p>	<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <p>✓ An evaluation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, and the associated Action Plan, was due to take place in early 2013. Delays in the process meant that the Irish government had less scope to influence and impact on the review than anticipated prior to the beginning of the Presidency of the EU Council. However, the Government and Irish Aid officials took an active role in a civil society roundtable on the Consensus in April; a welcome step in the bid to keep the Consensus and the Action Plan on the EU agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Lithuanian Presidency Programme has committed to “seek agreement on a new action plan for European humanitarian aid”. Ireland should play a leading role in ensuring that a new Action Plan is agreed and developed with the support of civil society.</li> <li>• Ireland should also promote the role that civil society can play in evaluating individual member states performance as humanitarian donors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>C+</b> <i>(on leading by example)</i></p>	<p><b>ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ireland has not reviewed its humanitarian strategy during the Presidency period. However, the Government did release its new Policy on International Development, reaffirming its commitment to the humanitarian principles and states it will “follow through on the EU’s European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid”. Though this is welcome there is no detail as to how this will be operationalised in the work of the government as a humanitarian donor. A strong gender focus is apparent in the policy.</li> </ul>	

### Manifesto Priority 4:

**Achieve necessary consensus among member states, within MFF negotiations, to ensure the EU fulfils its ODA commitments and upholds important human rights principles**

Grade	Achievements during Presidency	Action Points
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <p>✓ Presidency must be commended for facilitating a consensus among Member states on the EU budget for the next seven years and reaching political agreement with the European Parliament in spite of tense political climate.</p> <p>✓ The agreement calls for 90% of the EU’s overall external assistance to be counted as official development assistance (ODA).</p>	<p>With funds limited, it is important that in the technical discussions on the legal basis:</p> <p><b>(i)</b> these resources are targeted to those sectors, such as agriculture, health and basic education, where they can have the biggest impact on ending extreme poverty, and</p>

<b>Manifesto Priority 4 cont.</b>	<p><b>ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the context of an overall reduction to the EU budget, the Irish Presidency preferred to support the Council's conservative approach rather than the European Commission's proposal for increased EU external action, including development and humanitarian aid. As a result, the agreement amounts to freezing aid at current levels.</li> <li>This achievement therefore undermines the European Commission's plan to reach the collective 0.7% ODA/GNI target and fails to back up the Lisbon Treaty's commitments and plans for external action.</li> </ul>	<p>(ii) at least 70% of EU budget for external action be allocated to those instruments that are the most development, humanitarian aid, democracy and human rights oriented, namely Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Humanitarian Aid Instrument, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument</p>
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## Manifesto Priority 5:

**Support European Commission proposals that would enable citizens in developing countries to hold governments and businesses to account regarding revenue transparency to ensure that natural resources generate benefits for the whole population**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Achievements during Presidency</b>	<b>Action Points</b>
<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ireland played a pivotal role in securing the signing into law of the extractive and forestry industries new payment disclosure requirements on 26 June 2013. For oil, gas, mining and logging companies the new rules require annual disclose on any payments above €100,000 made to governments on a country-by-country and project-by-project basis. These rules apply to all relevant companies listed on EU regulated markets even if they are not registered in the EEA and are incorporated in other countries. Companies' public disclosure of this information will begin in 2015 or 2016.</li> <li>✓ In addition, Ireland also oversaw agreement on full country-by-country reporting for the banking sector, something that was not on the agenda prior to its Presidency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The directives agreed did not extend to the other sectors such as transportation or export. It is critical that in the review of these Directives in 2018 at the latest, they get extended to all sectors, so that the issue of tax avoidance and corruption is not limited to just the extractive industries.</li> <li>The disclosure should also be extended to cover a wider range of financial information than currently required.</li> <li>The Directives state that companies have to report on information in their annual report in a form agreed by the laws of each member state. At minimum Ireland should ensure that the reported data is required to be audited, included in companies' annual financial statements and also filed electronically in tagged standard formats and collated by, or on behalf, of the European Commission. Furthermore, it should push for other member states to also meet these standards.</li> </ul>

## Manifesto Priority 6:

**Uphold and protect the human rights of Palestinians, promoting support for the introduction of an EU-wide trade ban on produce from illegal Israeli settlements**

Grade	Achievements during Presidency	Action Points
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ There has been modest progress on the issue at EU level during the Presidency with Ireland joining a coalition of 13 states urging the EEAS to press ahead with EU wide labelling guidelines for settlement produce. This falls short of a ban which would be more effective, but is a move in the right direction.</li> <li>✓ During the presidency, Ireland co-hosted a round table event with other member states and members of The Elders, together with Trócaire and Christian Aid. At a joint press release afterwards including Jimmy Carter and Mary Robinson, the Tánaiste declared that <i>“settlements in the West Bank are illegal and therefore the products from those settlements should be treated as illegal in the European Union.”</i></li> <li>✓ The Tánaiste has made positive statements regarding Ireland introducing labelling of settlement products if the EU fails to agree on the introduction of common guidelines.</li> </ul> <p><b>ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the Irish government remains at the forefront of the debate at the EU, calling for a ban of settlement produce from the EU, the Irish government remains unwilling to introduce a ban at national level. This is disappointing, given that legal opinions have shown that it would be possible for Ireland to do this lawfully, and that unilateral action on this could significantly bring this issue forward.</li> <li>• Disappointingly, no new Council Conclusions on trade with Israeli settlements were adopted at the Foreign Affairs Council in June 2013.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is critical that this issue remains a priority during the Lithuanian Presidency and that EU-wide labelling guidelines are introduced at a minimum.</li> <li>• Now that Ireland no longer holds the Presidency, Ireland should be more active in coalition-building with other EU states that are potentially favourable towards introducing a ban.</li> <li>• Ireland should consider the introduction of an individual member state ban. At a minimum, Ireland should introduce labelling of settlement produce, and also issue strong guidelines to Irish businesses discouraging commercial links, investment and trade with Israeli settlements.</li> </ul>