

The Lisbon Treaty and Development
Dóchas Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs
27 May 2008

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On behalf of the 39 member organisations, including my colleagues present here today, I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity to address the Committee, to set out some of the Development-related aspects of the Referendum Treaty. Much of the national debate on the Treaty to date has been characterised by issues such as corporate tax rates, neutrality, agriculture reform, etc, and we are grateful for the opportunity to balance the debate by addressing some of the elements that make the Treaty – and its wider implications -- so important for development, and for the millions of people around the world who live in absolute poverty.

Dóchas represents 39 Irish member organisations, supported by some 850,000 supporters – one in every 5 people in the country – for whom poverty eradication is a prime goal. As the national umbrella group of Irish overseas Development NGOs, Dóchas also coordinates with NGO colleagues across Europe, who share similar views and concerns to those expressed by my colleagues Justin and Tom, on the Treaty. Ours is a passionate and committed constituency that considers it vital that the EU should keep development cooperation and independent humanitarian aid at the heart of the European project ...

It's because the Lisbon Treaty - if passed - will help define the future shape of European development cooperation and humanitarian aid that we undertook our own analysis of the Treaty text, held members meetings, took part in numerous debates with people of all shades of opinion on this Treaty, to formulate the Dóchas discussion paper which has been brought to your attention as Committee members...

The Dóchas paper – drawing on the inputs of people across the Irish NGO sector – sets out some of the pros and cons of the Treaty text for Development, and proposes some

areas on which Development NGOs would like to see clarity, or particular changes ...

Some of these include:

- Maintenance of a clear, independent space in the EU for Development, so that it is not instrumentalised for overall foreign policy objectives
- Retention of a Commissioner for Development, to ensure adequate political space and strength in EU policy-making and budgeting
- Improved Policy Coherence for Development, so that development goals are not undermined by other policy priorities – such as Trade, Agriculture or Security
- Proactive use of the space provided for scrutiny and oversight by the European Parliament and national parliaments in relation to EU development policy

Many of these have been addressed by Justin and Tom, so let me just expand a little Dóchas' thinking on three aspects:

One, the **institutional changes** are vital, and the detail of these remains to be worked out between the Commission and Council. We have, therefore, a real and important opportunity for Ireland to **engage actively as arrangements are being put in place** - now as planning is being undertaken but especially in the immediate weeks and months after the Treaty comes into force.

These arrangements -- from the remit of the High Representative to the scope and workings of the External Action Service, to the structure of the Commission and its different DGs – will have a vital influence on the nature, and ultimately impact, of Development and Humanitarian work.

It's for that reason that we urge that Irish Aid, the Perm Rep and the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs to play their full and active part in making sure that any of the new arrangements in Europe provide due space and priority to Development issues.

In doing so, we also urge that you will **continue to involve civil society organisations** – including the development NGOs who are members of Dóchas, and backed by hundreds of thousands Irish supporters – in your efforts, to

ensure that their considerable experience and expertise continues to be brought to bear.

Secondly, we would urge the Committee to support the **retention of a Commissioner for Development**, in order to assure a clear focus and strong political voice for development and humanitarian matters within the EU. If we are to make serious inroads in the fight against poverty and exclusion, we need clear leadership and guidance. Only by ensuring that Development concerns are represented at the table when it comes to decision-making time, can we be sure that these key interests – *cemented in the White Paper as a central plank of Irish foreign policy* – are reflected in Europe's relations with the wider world.

And Thirdly: Just as development is much wider than aid – involving economic aspects, human security, participation and social justice, human rights -- developing countries, and programmes, are also affected by so many other factors – whether they relate to trade, agriculture, biofuels, or wider political and diplomatic considerations... So Dóchas would strongly echo what Justin and Tom have said about the need for Policy Coherence for Development... which means, at a minimum, ensuring that we don't undermine development goals and activities through policies and actions in other areas...

This "Policy Coherence for Development" is embedded in EU development policy – and now enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, if that comes to pass – but progress on this requires political will and leadership, above all, and it's in building and strengthening that there's a vital role to play...

With the new scope, under the Lisbon Treaty text, for national parliaments to play a closer role in EU policy-making and scrutiny ... we would urge the Joint Committee to pay particular attention to **Policy Coherence for Development** in relation to Europe's policies -- and Ireland's input to those...

As development actors, we're very keen to ensure that Europe continues to put effective development cooperation and principled, independent humanitarian action at the heart of its external actions... and to put in place the systems and procedures needed to do that.

But any new situation, post-Lisbon, may require new arrangements and processes in national parliaments to respond to a new dynamic in the EU ... and I know that's something you're also considering in the Oireachtas, including this Committee...

Recent Oireachtas briefings by Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and Ministers of State for Overseas Development, show the importance of the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting – the GAERC – in EU affairs, and we welcome the Joint Committee's engagement on these.

We are available to help and support the work of the Joint Committee in this regard in any way we can... and would particularly welcome a regular, continuing role in relation to the so-called 'Development GAERCs'... the meetings of the EU Development Ministers, usually held twice a year... but there are Development impacts from many different policy areas, and Dóchas members have knowledge and expertise to offer on a whole range of thematic and geographic issues that may arise...

Looking to the future, the outcome of the Treaty votes will affect the pace and way in which the EU implements the Consensus on Development and the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid in the coming years ... and the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European can play an important role in monitoring and informing that.

The Joint Committee could also play a particularly useful and important role by scrutinising the annual Policy Coherence for Development report of the EU, prepared by the Commission. This is a recent initiative that could really benefit from the analysis, oversight and political momentum that the Joint Committee can bring to bear... There has been just one report so far, but the process promises to be a useful one – and could really help galvanise European political will to remove the impediments that hold back, or adversely, affect developing countries.

And so, to conclude: some of the important elements are not clear from the Treaty text alone, but will only become clear if and when the arrangements to give substance to it come to pass... if and when its provisions come to be implemented in practice... We foresee Ireland, as a proven friend of Development, working to protect and strengthen Development and Humanitarian roles within the EU – whatever happens on 12 June ...

And it is our view that, with the more active scrutiny role provided for in the Lisbon Treaty, the Oireachtas Joint Committee is in a stronger position than ever to help deliver principled and effective action in the EU's development and humanitarian activities...

We look forward to working with you – and helping you with your work in any we can –to make sure that the EU gives Development Cooperation the priority, political weight and focus needed to really help Make Poverty History.

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