

**DÓCHAS**  
*The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations*

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

15 May

**6 out of 7 Dublin MEP Candidates Support Legislation for Aid Target**

### **MEP candidates call for new approaches to global poverty**

Irish aid agencies today welcomed the commitments from all the MEP candidates in the Dublin Constituency to make Europe work for global development.

At a meeting organised by Dóchas, the network of 44 Irish development NGOs, eight MEP candidates set out their views on how the European Union can do more to help make global poverty history.

“The eight candidates running in the Dublin constituency for the European Parliament elections were very clear today: unless we make a number of fundamental changes to the way Europe is run, we are heading for a world with greater, not less, poverty and inequality” said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas.

The MEP candidates noted that the EU is the biggest aid donor in the world, but that many of its other policy areas were undermining the good work being achieved by European aid. They pointed out that factors such as unregulated global finance, EU fisheries policies, and the EU’s trade policies have direct, negative consequences for the world’s poorest people.

And all candidates pointed out that Ireland cannot renege on its promise to increase our aid to the world’s poorest countries.

“Ireland and Europe are not going to get out of the current crisis if we continue to practice short-term and reactive thinking. The government has cut the aid budget many times, which has done nothing to alleviate Ireland’s economic problems, but in stead has allowed thousands of people in developing countries to slide back into absolute poverty” continued Zomer.

Drawing inspiration from Ireland’s first rugby Grand Slam win in 61 years - and Leinster seeking their first Heineken Cup win - development agencies and their supporters used the meeting to call on European candidates to line out for development and tackle global poverty.

“It is extremely important that we choose Irish representatives that will use their influence in Brussels to build a Europe that shows solidarity with the world’s poorest people,” said Helen Keogh, chairperson of Dóchas.

“If the quality of the ideas that we heard today is followed through after the elections, then we are sure that Europe will make good progress in our efforts to eradicate global poverty”, Ms Keogh said.

The MEP candidates were asked if they would support legislation to make sure that Ireland honours its promise to spend 0.7% of national income (70 cents out of every 100 euro) on overseas aid.

The following MEP candidates said they would support such legislation:

- Proinsias de Rossa, Labour Party
- Joe Higgins, Independent
- Mary-Lou McDonald, Sinn Fein
- Patricia McKenna, Independent
- Gay Mitchell, Fine Gael
- Eoin Ryan, Fianna Fáil

The only MEP candidate present who did not support the call for legislation was Deirdre de Burca of the Green Party.

[ENDS]

#### **Notes to editors:**

- The **public debate forum** took place on **Friday 15 May** at the European Parliament office, 43 Molesworth Street, Dublin
- Dóchas manifesto for the European elections: “**There is Power in the Parliament – 10 ways Irish MEPs can make a difference for development in the next Parliamentary term**” is available at <http://www.dochas.ie/EPmanifesto.pdf>

On 5 June Ireland will join more than half a billion citizens of the 27 member States of the European Union (EU) to elect 736 Members of the European Parliament for the 2009-2014 term.

Dóchas is the umbrella organisation of Irish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved in development and relief overseas and/or development education in Ireland. Dóchas aims to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among its 44 members as well as to help them speak with a single voice on development issues. More information at [www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)

#### **Contact:**

**Hans Zomer, Dóchas Director, tel. 085 728 3258 / 01 405 3801**

## **Dóchas Member Agencies**

1. ActionAid Ireland
2. Action from Ireland
3. Africa Centre
4. Aidlink
5. Amnesty International-Irish Section
6. Bóthar
7. Camara
8. Centre for Global Education
9. ChildFund Ireland
10. Children in Crossfire
11. Christian Aid Ireland
12. Christian Blind Mission Ireland
13. Church Mission Society Ireland
14. Comhlámh
15. Concern Worldwide
16. Friends of Londiani (Ireland)
17. Galway One World Centre
18. Gorta
19. International Service Ireland
20. Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation
21. Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs
22. Irish Council for International Students
23. Irish Family Planning Association
24. Irish Foundation for Cooperative Development
25. Irish Missionary Union
26. Irish Red Cross
27. Kerry Action for Development Education
28. National Youth Council of Ireland
29. Oxfam Ireland
30. Plan Ireland
31. Progressio Ireland
32. Self Help Africa
33. SightSavers International
34. Skillshare International Ireland
35. Suas Educational Development
36. The Hope Foundation
37. Trócaire
38. Vita
39. Voluntary Service International
40. Voluntary Service Overseas
41. Volunteer Missionary Movement
42. War on Want Northern Ireland

43. Wingspread International
44. World Vision Ireland