

DÓCHAS
The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS STATEMENT

14 May 2009

Development NGOs call for a vote for justice

MEP candidates urged to tackle global poverty

Irish overseas development agencies will officially launch their vision of how Irish MEPs can make a difference for the world's poorest people at the offices of the European Parliament in Dublin on Friday morning.

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 are calling for 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, the network of Ireland's development NGOs.

After similar events in Maynooth and Cork this week, overseas development NGOs will hold a public panel debate in Dublin on Friday morning (10am -12pm), asking candidates in the constituency to set out what they will do about overseas development if elected.

Dóchas will launch a policy briefing, *There's Power in the Parliament*, after a photo call with candidates in the Dublin constituency. That briefing highlights 10 ways that soon-to-be elected Irish MEPs can ensure Ireland leads the fight in Europe for a fairer world.

While the European elections have not yet begun to dominate the headlines, Irish citizens do engage very actively with EU issues. Statistics released by the European Parliament show that Irish residents are among the most active EU citizens raising issues with their European representatives. Among the subjects most frequently raised by Irish people are human rights, EU foreign policy, trade policy, overseas aid and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

"The choices we will make on 5 June and the manner in which those Irish MEPs work in Brussels will have an enormous influence not just Ireland and Europe, but on the global community", Ms Keogh said.

[ENDS]

Notes to editors:

- **Photo opportunities:**
A group of schoolchildren from Griffeen Valley Educate Together, Lucan, Co. Dublin, challenge MEP candidates to 'tackle global poverty' with a giant rugby ball.
Friday 15 May at 9.45am at the European Parliament office, 43 Molesworth Street, Dublin

- The **public debate forum** will take place on **Friday 15 May from 10 to 12 noon** 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>

- Calendar of the Irish aid agencies public events:
 - Callan Hall, NUI Maynooth, from 1 to 2.30pm on 12 May;
 - the Imperial Hotel, Cork, from 12.30 to 2pm on 13 May;
 - the European Parliament office, Molesworth Street, Dublin, from 10am to 12pm on 15 May; and
 - the Harbour Hotel, Galway, from 6 to 7.30pm on 21 May.

- 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

Contact:

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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