

Doha Conference on Financing for Development

National Statement by Mr. Peter Power T.D., Minister for Overseas Development, Ireland, 30 November 2008

It is an honour to be in Doha. May I extend our sincere thanks to His Highness the Emir and the Government of Qatar for the warmth of their welcome.

We meet at a time of global economic crisis to review the implementation of the consensus forged at Monterrey six years ago. As representatives of developed and developing countries we must demonstrate clearly over the coming days that the partnership for development to which we have committed ourselves will not be undermined by our response to the economic crisis. Put simply, the poorest people on the planet – the almost one billion who do not have enough food to eat – cannot be the chief victims of a financial crisis which owes much to the greed of the already rich.

We are now more than half way towards the target date of 2015 for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. If we are to halve world poverty and hunger levels by that date, we need to be act more effectively and with greater determination, from now.

In 2002, the Monterrey Consensus was a vital step in defining the need for global solidarity and genuine partnership between nations. It articulated the reality that each State bears responsibility for its national development. That aid is not simply a matter of funding and spending. And that acts of commitment, reform and solidarity are demanded of all partners in development.

All our Governments have made a series of pledges and commitments in the context of a series of international conferences on development. Between us,

in Doha, we must now underscore the credibility of those pledges, and agree to act on them. The solidarity we worked to build in a growing global economy, is being seriously tested by the global crisis. It is now that the principles behind Monterrey demonstrate their real value.

Against this difficult background, we must not lose sight of the progress which has been made. We must safeguard it. Growth rates in developing countries have reached historically high levels, supported by improvements in governance and the development of trade and investment. Aid volumes have substantially increased, and in implementing the Paris Declaration and agreeing the Accra Agenda for Action, we are increasingly focusing on the effectiveness of aid.

Ireland is working hard to fulfil its part of the bargain. Despite serious economic difficulties at home, we remain on course to achieve the target of spending 0.7 percent of GNP on ODA. The European Union will achieve the target by 2015. We in Ireland intend to achieve it by 2012.

We expect that this year, Ireland's ODA will represent 0.56 percent of GNP, the highest ever. By design, our development assistance is 100 percent untied and overwhelmingly directed towards the poorest of the poor, the Least Developed Countries. Our absolute priority is the fight against global poverty and hunger. Our ambition for Doha is that, despite our clear differences of emphasis, we reach agreement as an international community to prioritise the weakest and the most vulnerable, working in partnership with the Least Developed Countries.

It is my firm conviction that, as we reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals we must devote greater effort and resources to fighting food insecurity in the developing world. How can we not prioritise the need

for a sustainable food supply? The other MDGs will be rendered academic if this, the most basic condition of human existence, is not met.

The Government of Ireland last year established a task force of national and international experts to make recommendations on ending the hunger crisis through concerted international action. Its report has been received, and it is blunt in its recommendations. It argues that States have not lived up to their obligations, or to their promises and commitments in relation to hunger. It calls for a renewed focus on agricultural productivity in Africa, and especially on the women who are primarily responsible for food production in the developing world. It calls for the targeting of maternal and infant undernutrition and it sets out the need for changes in governance and leadership priorities to build a real global political commitment on hunger. I am determined that the long term hunger crisis – and not just the emergency response to the rise in food prices - must be at the centre of our development policy. We must respond effectively, together.

Mr. President,

The commitments made at Monterrey on the development of sound macroeconomic policies, on good governance and the elimination of corruption are as important as the commitments on ODA flows. ODA will not be effective unless it assists our partners in their own development programmes.

If ODA is to be effective, if poverty eradication and sustainable development are to be achieved, the necessary conditions must be created at national level to ensure economic stability. The global economic downturn requires a global response. But at national level, it remains essential to encourage the development of the private sector and to create conditions conducive to investment and wealth creation.

The Monterrey Consensus contains a clear commitment to reform the International Financial Institutions. Action can no longer be avoided. As the G20 have recognised, this global reform is now an urgent priority. Ireland strongly believes that the governance of the Bretton Woods Institutions must reflect changing economic weights in the world economy in order to increase their legitimacy and effectiveness. In particular the Institutions must be more representative of emerging market economies.

Equally, despite the international efforts to which we have contributed strongly, we believe that further work needs to be done on relieving the debt burden on developing countries. We must ensure that the successes of recent years in freeing up resources for the alleviation of poverty are not undermined by irresponsible lending or borrowing in the future. The pernicious debt trap for the developing world must be conclusively eradicated for future generations.

Mr President,

Over the coming days we will review in detail the full range of commitments entered into in Monterrey. There will be points of difference and of disagreement between us. But we, as Government representatives, have to recognise the urgency of the moment. Our Conference must not become a divisive drafting session. We have an historic opportunity to recommit ourselves to working in partnership to eradicate world poverty. We must recommit ourselves with credibility to implementing the Millennium Development Goals. Unless we succeed in maintaining our focus on this dimension of the series of interlocking global crises we now face, we will not find sustainable solutions to any of them.

Thank You.