

Eleventh Meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD)

3rd June 2010, Conference Room, Iveagh House

Summary Minutes

Mr. Michael Gaffey, Deputy Director General Irish Aid, chaired the meeting in lieu of Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power, T.D., and conveyed the Minister's apologies.

(1) Opening Comments

On behalf of the Minister of State, Mr. Gaffey briefed the committee on the processes leading up to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Summit in September which will review progress on achieving the MDGs and focus on accelerating progress towards the achievement of all MDGs by 2015. While recognising the importance and interconnectedness, and recommitting to, all the MDGs Ireland will focus its attentions on MDG1 and prioritise addressing global hunger and food insecurity in preparation for and engagement at the Summit. In this context Ireland is working closely with the United States Administration on hunger issues and will co-host a high-level side event on hunger which will be chaired by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and Minister Micheál Martin.

Mr. Gaffey noted the extent of the work necessary at EU level in order to ensure that Ireland's focus on global hunger and MDG 1 was adequately reflected in the EU common position for the summit. He also noted shifts in policy positions at national level across the EU and the impact of budgetary pressure on the aid programmes of the Member States.

Mr. Gerard Monks, Department of Enterprise Trade and Innovation (DETI) suggested that there was scope for greater emphasis on Aid for Trade as part of Ireland's hunger agenda including international trade, noting the linkages between customs clearance and food spoilage. He also suggested that research being undertaken by Teagasc (e.g. on new varieties of potato) could also contribute to Ireland's response to hunger

(2) Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the tenth IDCD meeting of the 26th November 2009, were agreed by the Committee.

(3) IDCD appearance before Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs

Mr. Gaffey informed the meeting that the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs (JCFA) had invited Irish Aid and the Department of Finance to appear before it to report on the progress made by the IDCD and specifically on policy coherence issues relating to taxation. The request followed the publishing of a Christian Aid report on taxation and development which noted the large revenue losses incurred by developing countries, including Ireland's programme countries, as a result of the tax practices of multinational companies.

Mr. Gaffey briefed the JCFA on the work of the IDCD and on Irish Aid policy and practice in the area of taxation and development. At the meeting, Mr. Gary Tobin, Department of Finance (DoF), took the lead in answering questions on taxation policy. Ms Niamh Campbell Nolan, DoF, noted that there is confusion about the links between Ireland's corporation tax and abuse of transfer pricing. Ireland fully supports tax transparency and the DoF has been actively engaged in developing international standards for transparency and exchange of information in tax matters at the OECD¹ including volunteering for a peer review.

The DoF took the opportunity to brief the JCFA on the cooperation between the Irish Revenue Commissioners and the Rwanda Revenue Authority. Mr. Gaffey noted this was an excellent demonstration of collaboration between DFA and DoF in addressing poverty through building capacity to improve revenue collection.

Mr. Gaffey noted that there had been a useful discussion at the JCFA on the role of the IDCD as a coordinating, rather than policymaking, body. The issue of the negotiation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries had also been raised by the Committee. Mr. Patrick Bailey, DETI, recalled a useful presentation on EPAs that ECDPM made at a meeting of the EPA Like Minded group hosted by Irish Aid, which the Secretariat agreed to circulate.

(4) Climate Change post Copenhagen

Dominick O'Brien and Owen Ryan, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG), updated the group on progress on Climate Change post the UNCCC COP 15 meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009. While the outcome at Copenhagen was disappointing, the discussions are moving forward and the majority of parties have associated themselves with the Copenhagen Accord. Informal negotiations are underway and while it is unlikely that an agreement will be reached this year it is expected that there will be significant developments by the December 2010 meeting in Cancun leading to an agreement in South Africa in 2011. Ireland has consistently supported a pro-active approach. The EU position is unchanged.

It is acknowledged that developing countries were the biggest losers at Copenhagen, notwithstanding the financial package for adaptation. It was suggested that a lack of trust undermined the Copenhagen meeting. Hindsight has shown that the EU needed to build alliances with more like-minded countries such as the African States and some of the smaller LDCs. Michael Gaffey noted the Minister Micheál Martin will be travelling to Ethiopia and Uganda at the end of June and that Ethiopia coordinated on behalf of African States at Copenhagen.

The Taoiseach committed Ireland to contributing up to €100 million over the three years to the fast track financing for adaptation which will have budget implications for 2011/2012.

(5) IDCD Annual Report

¹ The Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information brings together jurisdictions, both OECD and non-OECD, that have made commitments to transparency and exchange of information and have worked together to develop the international standards for transparency and exchange of information in tax matters.

Colleagues were thanked for their recent inputs; DoD and DETI indicated that they would have additional inputs. It was agreed that these would be incorporated and the draft re-circulated for approval by silent procedure.

(6) Departmental Statements on PCD

Departments gave updates on their progress to date:

- i. DEHLG have completed their first draft and comments have been received. The statement reflects ongoing work and the Department's work on climate change. It will feed into the Department's Statement of Strategy which is currently under preparation.
- ii. DETI are also developing a new Statement of Strategy and will integrate PCD issues into the trade section.
- iii. DAFF have a draft statement which is being discussed internally

(7) Report from the Sub Groups

The Secretariat conveyed apologies from the Chairs of the two sub-groups who were not available for the meeting.

Multilateral sub-group

Carol Hannon, IDCD Secretariat, recalled that at the last meeting there was a proposal to reactivate this sub-group with a specific focus on defining a more strategic approach to working with multilaterals and improving the quality of Ireland's policy engagement, coordination of reporting on funding and engagement with multilaterals. To advance this she requested that Departments who engage with multilaterals send details of their relationship with the organisations and the name and contact details for the relevant contact in the Department.

Ms Hannon informed the Committee that there had been a number of developments on increasing Irish Representation in Multilateral and UN agencies since Frank Flood's presentation at the last meeting. A proposal for a systematic approach to Irish recruitment to the United Nations has been submitted to the Irish Aid Senior Management Group. The proposal proposes to pilot a more systematic approach to placing Irish nationals at entry and mid-level within the UN system by (a) identifying in advance the agencies and sectors with potential for Irish recruitment and nominating suitable candidates, (b) re-examining entry level mechanisms used in the past such as the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) scheme and the United Nations Volunteers internship scheme (which has given 65 interns placements with UN agencies since 2005), and (c) further develop and maintain Ireland's contacts with Irish personnel in the UN.

The Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre will implement the pilot over a period of 12/18 months in consultation with other sections in Irish Aid, Political Division and with the Permanent Missions.

The Department of Finance have also been discussing recruitment opportunities at the Asian Development Bank. The ADB also has a young professional programme which is fully funded by the Bank and Irish Aid is following up with the Department of Finance on how to avail of this opportunity.

Skills Set Sub-group

A development awareness seminar was held in the Department of the Taoiseach on 29th April with very good attendance and feedback. Aileen Shanahan, Department of the Taoiseach, noted that the seminar had been well received and that some of those that attended have followed up with visits to the Irish Aid Centre. The last of the development awareness seminars will be held in the Department of Defence when a suitable date can be agreed.

Recent reviews of various countries' experience of promoting coherence underline the need to build specific awareness on policy coherence for development. Ms Hannon suggested that the formulation of Departmental Statements could be used as an opportunity to highlight links between a Department's own policies and strategies and development outcomes by having a briefing session with relevant staff (i.e. those involved in policy making, budgeting, international negotiations, including EU, or interaction with public and interest groups).

The sub-group has also followed up on the decision to adopt an incremental and targeted approach by meeting with the Hunger Task Team in Irish Aid and with the Department of Agriculture to try and identify how Irish expertise in the agriculture sector could support our work in this area in our programme countries. There is a need for more discussion with country programme offices to identify the range of expertise needed and then try and match this with what is available in Ireland.

There are a number of other potential areas emerging which the sub-group will also follow up on.

(8) Indicators for Policy Coherence for Development

Ms Hannon informed the Committee that Michael King from IIS has started work on the development of index of PCD indicators for Ireland that could form the basis of a regular evaluation of Ireland's progress towards policy coherence and has met with the Departments of Agriculture, Environment and Justice to discuss sets of indicators for each of these areas. Unfortunately due to other demands Mr King has not yet been able to work on draft indicators for other sectors. He expects to resume work in the second half of this month with a view to completing the work by August depending of course on the availability of departments to meet and provide feedback on the draft indicators.

(9) Policy Coherence for Development at EU and OECD

The European Commission has prepared a Policy Coherence for Development Work Programme for 2010-2013 based on the five priorities identified in the Council Conclusions approved in November, these are: Trade and finance, Climate change, Food security, Migration, and Security. A summary of the work programme was circulated by the Secretariat (annex a).

A new Senior Advisor to the OECD Secretary General on Policy Coherence for Development has been appointed. A summary of developments at the OECD is attached (annex b).

It was noted that the profile of policy coherence for development is increasing at EU and OECD level and it will feature at the MDG summit. The economic crisis has been a spur to increase aid effectiveness and policy coherence. Michael Gaffey noted that in terms of policy coherence we have moved beyond looking for inconsistencies and are now looking for synergies.

(10) A.O.B.

The Department of Finance informed the Committee that Mr Samy Watson, Executive Director, World Bank would be visiting the following week and would make a presentation to Irish Aid, Limerick on "World Bank 2010 - Strategic Directions and New Challenges" .

The Department of Justice noted that the Global Forum on Migration and Development will be held in Mexico in November. Ireland's planning process has already started and a joint delegation from DoJLR and DFA will attend.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government noted the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution to hold the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio 2012. Preparations for Rio +20 have already begun and DEHLG and DFA attended the 1st Preparatory Committee Meeting in May in New York.

The Central Statistics Office noted that the International Statistical Institute will hold the 58th World Statistics Congress in Dublin in 2011. Five thousand delegates are expected to attend and there may be sessions of interest to the Committee.

(11) Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Inter Departmental Committee on Development was provisionally scheduled for October 2010 following the MDG Summit and will focus on the work on PCD indicators.

Inter-Departmental Committee on Development Meeting

11th Meeting, 3rd June 2010

Department:	Name:
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Ann Derwin
Central Statistics Office	Siobhan Carey
Department of Defence	Ciaran Murphy James Ryan
Defence Forces	Lt. Col. Eamon Caulfield
Department of Education and Skills	Apologies
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation	Gerard Monk Patrick Bailey
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government	Dominick O'Brien Owen Ryan
Department of Finance	Marianne Nolan Niamh Campbell
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Gerry O'Regan
Department of Social Protection	Ann Mulrennan
Department of the Taoiseach	Aileen Shanahan
Department of Transport	Apologies
Department of Foreign Affairs	Michael Gaffey Carol Hannon Catherine Brennan Justin Dolan

