



**A submission to the Review
by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
of
Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations**

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Contributed by IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association,

Supporting and advancing development education

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Introduction:

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) welcomes the public consultation and call for submissions for the Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations. As members of civil society concerned with the promotion of global justice, IDEA members and the development education sector in Ireland make a significant contribution to the delivery, reception and public understanding of Ireland's foreign policy, in particular with regard to issues of international development and human rights.

The development education sector in Ireland plays a leading role nationally and in European development education. IDEA members represent a spectrum of civil society and NGO actors. The sector has been recognized by European colleagues as a strong example of good practice in development education¹. With membership of 75 organizations in addition to 37 individuals, IDEA represents a significant voice within Irish civil society devoted to building public understanding of global justice, active citizenship and engagement with global justice, and local - global approaches to shared challenges.

Issues for consultation

IDEA welcomes the commitments, in the Public Consultation Document under "the core elements of Irish foreign policy", to the promotion of human rights, disarmament and arms control, the fight against hunger and poverty and support for international development, and global conflict resolution efforts. We welcome the statement that the international community has a responsibility to respond effectively to global challenges such as hunger and climate change. We believe that **universalism in international policy commitments and targets such as post-2015 development goals is essential** to effectively respond to and tackle these issues. These global challenges can only be addressed through global action that involves states and citizens in all parts of the world. The international community has not only a responsibility but also a requirement to act in concert to address these global challenges.

Of the trends and environmental changes listed in the document, we would like to particularly focus on "the emergence of individuals and networks of citizens as global actors" driving global change. Citizens' participation in and engagement with the decisions that affect them is essential to address today's challenges at local, national and global levels. Networks of citizens can affect change, and build the awareness and understanding that enables social change and tackling global challenges. **Supporting citizens' and civil society participation in political**

¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/ge/DE_Watch.pdf Accessed 29/01/14

process and decision making should therefore be a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy. In particular:

- Supporting and defending civil society space, and supporting emerging participative civil society spaces should be a priority for Ireland's foreign policy.
- Support, through UN mechanisms, for participative and transformative education through Global Education First: The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education which states "Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies."²

Ireland should aim to be champion of citizens' movements and public participation globally. This will enhance Ireland's standing internationally as a voice for human rights and global justice, and as a global leader with strong clearly articulated commitments to global justice, human rights and civil society.

The Public Consultation Document identifies several key issues for the consultation. We will focus on the following areas:

Promoting Values and Interests

Ireland's foreign policy must be based on clear central values of equality, human rights and global justice. Clear commitments to these values as a central element of Irish foreign policy must be articulated and backed-up with relevant instruments and practice.

As a small state with limited resources and influence, Ireland can play a global role by taking leadership in our commitment to these values and the enforcement of these values. In doing so, Ireland can build on the strong reputation gained by Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade diplomatic missions, foreign policy and CSO / NGO sector in the areas of international development, human rights and global justice. If a clear commitment is made to be an international voice for values based foreign policy, Ireland can build on the momentum and strong foreign policy voice established through our role in international processes such as the post-2015 process. Specific named commitments should be made on Ireland's support for:

- Tackling inequality and ending hunger and poverty.
- Universalist approaches to global challenges including climate change and the post-2015 development goals.

² <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/220.htm> Accessed 29/01/14

- Ensuring public participation in political processes and decision making, and supporting democratization.
- Supporting and defending civil society space.
- Promoting human rights and protecting human rights defenders.

This human rights based approach guards against unintended discrimination and potential vulnerability of many groups such as older people, women, children and people with disabilities. The inclusivity of using the human rights legal framework and taking a human rights based approach is vital.

Development education and civil society, both domestically and internationally, have a crucial role to play in ensuring public understanding of these values and active citizenship engagement with the delivery of Ireland's values based foreign policy.

IDEA endorses the recommendation from Dóchas, with human rights protection and promotion already a high priority in Ireland's foreign relations, that the revised foreign policy should advance a rights-based approach to foreign policy and external relations. This would offer a logical, coherent and just means by which to calibrate Ireland's political and economic diplomacy.

Such an approach, built upon Ireland signing core human rights Conventions to which it is not a party and ratifying those to which it is, would help the State guard against its external relations unintentionally leading to discrimination against, or increasing the vulnerability of, poor countries or cohorts of older people, women, children and people with disabilities.

Advancing a rights-based approach means that Irish foreign policy should be developed and implemented in as transparent a manner as possible, with citizen engagement in participatory development of policy guidance notes or more formal papers on issues of national interest. This should be matched with accountability for clearly articulated and reported Irish positions and votes in international negotiations, fora and diplomatic efforts.

International Development

- *One World, One Future*, Ireland's policy on international development.

IDEA welcomes Ireland's policy on international development, *One World, One Future* and in particular the whole of government approach. We welcome the strong commitments to equality, human rights, reduced hunger, and sustainable development.

We welcome the commitments within the policy to Development Education and to accountability at home and abroad.

IDEA argues that **a commitment to accountability requires support for Development Education**. Accountability requires public education. Public understanding of global justice issues is necessary to ensure public accountability for Ireland's international development policy. There is a fundamental link between any government policy that emphasizes accountability and the corresponding need for education. Any policy committing to accountability must have a corresponding commitment to education. Development Education is therefore a crucial element of Ireland's foreign policy and international development policy.

One World, One Future stresses the importance of maintaining public support for Ireland's international development programme. Critical understanding and engagement with global justice issues is a prerequisite for long term public engagement and support of Ireland's international development and human rights policies. Development Education is therefore essential for maintaining public engagement with Ireland's foreign policy. These policies require prioritization of and investment in Development Education in Ireland.

IDEA supports the focus on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). This is a crucial mechanism for the delivery of *One World, One Future* as a whole of government approach. IDEA urges the engagement of the Department of Education and Skills in the delivery of Ireland's policy on international development and Ireland's foreign policy.

The Department of Education and Skills National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in conjunction with *One World, One Future*, creates a strong policy mechanism for a cross-departmental or whole of government approach. Complimentarity with key related policy instruments should be considered with the Irish Aid Development Education Unit as a key actor. International initiatives such as Global Education First: The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education and the UN Post-2015 framework should inform Ireland's foreign policy, in particular the emphases on a rights-based approach to development, on participation and on global justice, ensuring policy coherence for international development and for sustainable development.

IDEA supports the Dóchas submission to the review that proposes that Ireland should vigorously promote policy coherence as an important lens and mechanism by which Ireland can bring focus, rigour and fairness across policy areas, and to its foreign policy and external relations overall.

Ireland should identify incoherent positions and practices across Government, and set out how it will remedy them, if it is to achieve a dynamic balance between its global interests in sustainable development with enhanced human rights, peace and security, and narrow trade or investment interests.

Properly implemented, policy coherence for development would ensure that we adopt a strategic approach to international issues and diplomacy; that the full breadth of Irish foreign policy interests is reviewed before clearly articulated and justified Government positions are decided upon; and that we are much less likely to undermine international peace and stability, human rights or sustainable human development, to which we are committed as a State.

In this context, IDEA supports Afri in emphasising the need for an acknowledgment in the White Paper of militarization as a major contributor to poverty and underdevelopment in the world. This manifests itself in a number of ways including enabling oppressive and undemocratic regimes to maintain power and in the diversion of vast resources away from the basic needs of people. The annual global military budget for 2012 was in excess of 17 billion dollars. It is vital for foreign policy and international development policy to make the link between this resource misuse and poverty and hunger. Irish foreign policy should be focused on disarmament for development, rather than in any way contributing to the militarization that creates so many problems, particularly for developing countries.

- Framework for global development post-2015.

As stated above, a clear commitment to values based foreign policy will enable Ireland to build on our leading role in the post-2015 process and negotiations. Drawing on the central values of equality, human rights and global justice, IDEA identifies two specific focuses for Ireland's foreign policy engagement with the post-2015 process:

- **Universalism** is an essential principal for the post-2015 framework which Ireland must defend and take a lead on. Universal international policy commitments and targets are essential to effectively respond to and tackle the global challenges of inequality and climate change. These global challenges require global action from the international community. The commitments in the post-2015 process to date to universalism must be defended and enshrined in the post-2015 new integrated framework for international

development. Universalism and the local-global nature of global challenges is central to the ethos of Development Education and the active citizenship that is enabled by Development Education.

- **Participation of citizens** in decision making must remain a central focus for the post - 2015 UN development goals. Citizens' participation in and engagement with the decisions that affect them is essential to address today's challenges at local, national and global levels. Support to date in the post-2015 process for participation and a human rights based approach must be included in the post-2015 new integrated framework for international development.

Ireland's foreign policy should include mechanisms to amplify and communicate to the UN and inter-governmental bodies the innovation and best practice within Irish Civil Society on these core approaches of the Post-2015 framework, approaches which are exemplified in the Irish development education, international development and human rights sectors.

- United Nations and multi-lateral initiatives.

Ireland's foreign policy should prioritise support for **Global Education First: The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education** in particular Priority 3 focusing on global citizenship education. "The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it. Education must also be relevant in answering the big questions of the day. Technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century."³ The impact of this initiative across government departments should be incorporated into Ireland's foreign policy and Ireland's whole of government approach to international development.

Conclusion

Ireland has an opportunity to build on our strong international reputation to promote foreign policy and international relations based on global justice. A foreign policy based on clear

³ <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/220.htm> Accessed 29/01/14

central values of equality, human rights and global justice, and backed by strong and instruments and practices, will enable Ireland to play a world leading role in the post-2015 era. In taking this approach, Ireland has an opportunity to both shape and reflect changes in global geo-politics. The participation of citizens and civil society is essential to meet the global challenges that we face, and in creating a just and secure future for all global citizens. In response to this review, Ireland's foreign policy has the opportunity to take a global lead in innovative value-based and citizen-focused foreign policy.

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