

Department of Foreign Affairs

Programme for Government 2007-2012 *‘A Blueprint for Ireland’s Future’*

Progress Report on Commitments

September 2008

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**Programme for Government 2007-2012
'A Blueprint for Ireland's Future'**

***Status Report on Commitments relevant to the
Department of Foreign Affairs***

Executive Summary

The Programme for Government outlines a wide range of key objectives and commitments relevant to the Department of Foreign Affairs. This ambitious Programme commits the Government to delivering real results for our citizens across our foreign policy priorities, including in relation to Northern Ireland, Irish Aid, the UN, the disarmament agenda, the European Union and protecting the needs of all our citizens abroad. Important progress has already been achieved in delivering on these commitments and the major achievements to date are summarised below.

Peace and Unity

North-South Cooperation

Following the restoration of power-sharing in Northern Ireland, significant progress has been made in the area of North-South cooperation and the promotion of the All-Island Economy. This included a successful Investment Conference in Belfast in May 2008; a contribution of €60m to a new North South Innovation Fund; a €80m roads investment package for Northern Ireland and the creation of a single electricity market for the island.

Anti-Sectarianism Fund

The Government continued to emphasise the crucial importance of overcoming the divisions of the past and working toward a shared future for all of the people in Northern Ireland. As a practical expression of this support, the Minister for Foreign Affairs launched the Anti-Sectarianism Fund in February 2008 to assist local efforts aimed at tackling sectarianism and to support projects in communities seeking new and more effective ways of addressing division in society.

Security Normalisation

Further progress was made on security normalisation, with British troop levels in Northern Ireland below the target agreed and with a further commitment to the early closure of additional bases.

Ireland in the World

United Nations

Ireland continued to play a leading role in UN reform efforts at UN Headquarters and at country level. Ireland acted (with Tanzania) as co-facilitator for the System-wide Coherence (SWC) initiative within the UN General Assembly, while Irish Embassies were active in promoting UN reform at country level. The Irish/Tanzanian co-chairs' report on SWC, aimed at achieving more coherent and joined up UN engagement in the field, was presented to the President of the General Assembly on 21 July 2008.

Conflict Resolution

Nuala O'Loan has been appointed as Ireland's first Roving Ambassador, with the role of Special Envoy for Conflict Resolution in Timor-Leste. The Special Envoy has completed a substantive visit to Timor-Leste and submitted an interim report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs making preliminary observations and recommendations on appropriate Irish conflict resolution initiatives there.

Cluster Munitions

The formal Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions, to negotiate a new treaty, was hosted and chaired by Ireland. It was opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Dublin in May 2008. Over 100 States adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which will be opened for signature in Oslo in December 2008. The Convention effectively bans all cluster munitions which have ever been used and also provides ground-breaking provisions for victim assistance and clearance of contaminated areas. It represents a major advance in international humanitarian law.

Darfur

The Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Sudan and Chad from 14-16 November 2007 and conveyed Ireland's concerns about the situation in Darfur to the authorities in both countries. At the end of 2007, Ireland provided €500,000 in financial support to the ongoing UN/African Union-mediated Darfur peace talks. Ireland has contributed approximately 400 troops to EUFOR Tchad/RCA, which is contributing to humanitarian protection in Chad and is addressing regional instability arising from the Darfur crisis. The EUFOR Tchad/RCA mission reached Initial Operational Capacity on 15 March 2008.

Disarmament and Arms

The Control of Exports Act 2008 (No. 1 of 2008) was enacted on 27 February 2008 and entered into force on 5 May 2008. Work is currently progressing on secondary legislation to give full effect to the provisions of the Act.

Irish Aid

Information and Volunteering Centre

The Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre opened in January 2008. It is a state of the art, flexible multi-media exhibition space designed to raise awareness of development issues and the role of Irish Aid in tackling global poverty. Since its opening, it has attracted over 14,000 visitors and 107 school groups. It held ninety development and volunteering related events in its first five months.

Rapid Response Initiative

Irish Aid's Rapid Response Initiative is helping to ensure that responses are made as quickly and as effectively as possible to humanitarian emergencies. Emergency supplies for this purpose were stockpiled at two locations, the Curragh Camp of the Defence Forces and the United Nations Humanitarian Response Base in Brindisi, Italy. Disbursements have been made to emergencies in several countries, including Peru, Burma and Iraq. Members of the Rapid Response Corps have been deployed to 16 countries to date.

Hunger Task Force

The Hunger Task Force, comprising fifteen Irish and international experts on food security and development, was established in 2007. The report of the Hunger Task Force will be launched in September 2008 and will outline a number of key actions which Ireland can take to give practical leadership internationally on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of those who suffer from hunger by 2015. Following the launch of the report, the Government will prepare its response to the recommendations.

Irish Abroad

Undocumented Citizens in the United States

The Government continues to attach the highest importance to resolving the plight of our undocumented citizens in the United States. We are also working closely with the US Administration, the US Congress and the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform to build support for specific legislative proposals establishing medium and long term bilateral immigration arrangements between Ireland and the United States.

RTÉ's International Service

RTÉ's new international service is due to be launched in November 2008 through a digital satellite TV service called Freesat. This new international service will provide the Irish abroad, including the elderly and isolated members of our community in Britain, with a valuable link to home.

Ireland in Europe

Tax Harmonisation

The Government's opposition to moves towards tax harmonisation has been articulated effectively by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Finance. Both Departments continue to lobby Member States in order to develop partnerships which could effectively oppose moves towards tax harmonisation.

Improve the quality of communications between the Union and its citizens

The Department of Foreign Affairs commissioned a research project to analyse current public attitudes toward the European Union in Ireland, as well as to understand the reasons underlying voting decisions in the referendum on 12 June 2008. The research results will also provide key insights for on-going communications about Ireland's role within the European Union.

Ensure that Ireland does not become involved in an EU common defence.

The Constitutional prohibition on Ireland joining an EU common defence remains in place and would have been reaffirmed had the Constitutional amendment on ratification of the Lisbon Treaty been successful. No proposals have been made in respect of an EU common defence, and Ireland remains steadfast in adhering to our traditions and values in matters of defence.

PEACE AND UNITY

North/South Co-operation

Implement the groundbreaking Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy

The Government have implemented a range of initiatives suggested in the Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy in its first year in office.

In January 2008, the Government committed €60 million to the cross-border Innovation Fund announced by the Northern Ireland Minister for Finance and Personnel in the Assembly.

The overseas offices of Enterprise Ireland, as well as its trade missions, have been made available to companies from throughout the island, and Northern Ireland companies have taken part in missions to destinations including South Africa, Mexico and Brazil.

In May 2008, the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the US Investment Conference in Belfast and made the case for international investment in the all-island economy. Ministers had previously promoted the US Investment Conference in a series of engagements across the United States for St. Patrick's Day.

Other initiatives which have strengthened and deepened the all-island economy within the last year include the launch of the North-West Business Complex by Ministers North and South; the creation of a single electricity market for the island; the announcement on financial services confirming the entitlement of companies in the South to delegate support functions to NI and North/South Ministerial Council support for new InterTradeIreland corporate and business plans for the coming years.

Have a fully operational all-island energy market, to include an all-island approach to the renewable energy sector, a second electricity inter-connector and an all-island gas network. Introduce a Single Electricity Market by November 2007

Planning for a second North-South electricity inter-connector is underway, and the link is expected to be operational in 2012. In January 2008, the Government and NI Executive launched the all-island electricity grid study, the first comprehensive assessment of the ability of the electrical power system to absorb large amounts of electricity from renewable sources North and South. The potential for a shared approach will now be considered by relevant Departments. Discussions are also ongoing between the relevant agencies and industry with a view to agreeing common all island arrangements for natural gas.

The Single Electricity Market for the island went 'live' with effect from 1 November 2007, and was welcomed at a joint event in Belfast attended by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and Northern Ireland's Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Actively support fully integrated and seamless co-operation in the areas of health, education, infrastructural development, communications, planning and other public service.

The Government intensified cooperation with the Northern Ireland Executive in the areas of health and education over the last twelve months. In the health sector, Ministers North and South are jointly preparing a draft report on strategic health cooperation and have already endorsed the provision of radiotherapy services in Belfast for patients from Donegal and the provision of Paediatric Congenital Cardiac services in Dublin for patients from Belfast. Out-of-hours GP services are also available on a cross-border basis in Derry (for patients from Donegal) and in Monaghan (for patients from Armagh).

In the education sector, co-operation is ongoing in the areas of teacher qualifications and superannuation, special education needs, educational underachievement and school, youth and teacher exchanges. Ministers North and South have also made considerable progress on the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Autistic Children at Middletown in Armagh.

Infrastructural development on the island is set to be significantly enhanced by plans to upgrade roads within Northern Ireland to Derry/Letterkenny and from Belfast to Larne. The Dublin-Belfast corridor was also improved greatly with the opening of the Dundalk-Newry Section of the M1 in August 2007.

In the area of communications, Departments North and South collaborated on the EU-assisted 'Project Kelvin', which aims to enhance direct international connectivity between the North-West and North America and Europe. This has the potential to significantly reduce international broadband costs in the North-West of the island and make the region more attractive for Foreign Direct Investment.

Press for a single all-island corporation tax of 12.5%.

The Government strongly supported the campaign of the political parties and business community in Northern Ireland for a single all-island corporation tax rate of 12.5%. However, a report issued by Sir David Varney in December 2007 – and accepted by UK Treasury – recommended against reducing corporation tax rates in Northern Ireland.

The Government again engaged with Sir David Varney ahead of a second report in April 2008 on how to expand the private sector in Northern Ireland and enhance competitiveness. This second Report strongly promoted the potential of the all-island economy, and recommended greater interaction between the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland over the years ahead.

Continue to progress the North West Gateway Initiative

The North-West Gateway Initiative (NWGI), launched by the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference in May 2006, provides an over-arching strategic framework to guide investment and enhance public services in Donegal, Derry, Limavady and Strabane. Work has continued on the Initiative between Departments North and South, and the restored Northern Ireland Executive took the decision to re-engage on the Initiative in February 2008.

A non-statutory Spatial Planning Framework for the North-West is being developed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Northern Ireland's Minister for Regional Development.

The agreement on Government support to enhance the A5 road to Derry/Letterkenny to dual-carriageway status will provide a major boost to the North-West economy. The Government has also committed €10.87 million to the City of Derry Airport, with the first payment from this made in February 2008. Higher education cooperation between Letterkenny Institute of Technology and the University of Ulster has been supported through the Strategic Innovation Fund.

Border Communities

Press for all-island planning and co-ordination in infrastructural investment across the Island.

The Government's National Spatial Strategy and the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy share many mutually interdependent characteristics such as recognition of the potential of the Dublin/Belfast corridor and the Letterkenny/ Derry area in the North West. Significant progress is being made in this area.

The Government and Northern Ireland Executive continue to coordinate plans for infrastructural investment through the North/South Ministerial Council. Major projects agreed within the NSMC over 2007/08 include the Government's roads investment package in Northern Ireland, and agreement to restore the Ulster Canal from Clones to Upper Lough Erne.

Establish a cross-border Innovation Fund.

The Government committed €60 million over four years to the cross-border Innovation Fund announced by the Northern Ireland Minister for Finance and Personnel in January 2008. This funding will be matched by the Northern Ireland Executive. The Fund will focus on collaborative research and development.

In May 2008, an all-island Innovation Voucher initiative was jointly launched by Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI. This initiative will allow small and medium sized enterprises North and South of the border to access research expertise in the other jurisdiction.

Support the development of cross-border projects including:

- ***The Dublin – Letterkenny/Derry dual carriageway***
- ***The Border Corridor***
- ***The Ulster Canal***
- ***The Bridge at Narrow-Water.***

The North/South Ministerial Council Plenary meeting of July 2007 reached agreement on the Government's €80 million roads investment package for Northern Ireland, which will contribute to the upgrading of the A5 road from Aghnacloy to Derry/Letterkenny to dual-carriageway status. Management structures for the project have been agreed and consultants appointed to carry out a route corridor study. The preliminary route corridor assessment is due to be completed by the end of 2008, and further key milestones have been agreed and will be aligned with the timing of payments from the Government.

The Border Corridor route will be assessed for funding upon completion of the major inter-urban routes identified under Transport 21. The Government has, in the interim, provided funding to Cavan County Council and Leitrim County Council to improve existing routes.

The Government and the Northern Ireland Executive reached agreement at the NSMC Plenary meeting in July 2007 on a Government contribution of €35 million to restore the Ulster Canal from Clones to Upper Lough Erne. Consultations have since begun with land owners on the route and the relevant statutory agencies, and procedures have commenced for the development of the preliminary design.

The Government have provided €390,000 to Louth County Council to undertake preliminary technical work on a bridge at Narrow Water, to improve tourist links between Co. Louth and Co. Down. This technical work, which will include the preferred route, preliminary design, and an environmental impact statement, is expected to be available before the end of the year. The Government and the Northern Ireland Executive will then consult, through the North/South Ministerial Council, on options for the funding of the bridge.

Campaign for the complete removal of North-South cross-border telecoms and bank charges.

In response to approaches from the Taoiseach, Ministers and the Regulators, all four Irish mobile phone operators introduced special roaming tariffs to address the high roaming cost on the island of Ireland. On 30 November 2007, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources introduced regulations which

provide for penalties of up to €500,000 on electronic communications providers for non-compliance with obligations and requirements imposed on them in the EU Roaming Regulation.

The Government and Northern Ireland Executive have established a working group of the North/South Ministerial Council to examine cross-border banking issues, including transaction charges. Officials from the working group have met the main banking groups to discuss providing details of fees and charges for a selection of typical cross-border transactions and making this information available to customers on the internet.

The Government also welcomed the announcement in November 2007 by National Irish Bank and Northern Bank that they are abolishing fees for electronic cross-border transfers for accounts in the same name.

Further develop the Dublin-Belfast rail line as part of an integrated rail service serving major population centres, North and South.

The Government and the Northern Ireland Executive have discussed, over the last year, options for redeploying additional existing rolling stock on the Dublin to Belfast line, which could lead to improved frequency of service along the Eastern Corridor. This issue was discussed at the North/South Ministerial Council Plenary meeting in February 2008, at which the Council looked forward to the early assessment of options for the future development of the Dublin/Belfast Enterprise rail service, especially in relation to increased service frequency and reduced travel times.

Iarnród Éireann and Translink in Northern Ireland are now finalising proposals in the form of a costed business case, which is expected to be considered by Ministers at a North/South Ministerial Council meeting in the Transport Sector before the end of 2008.

Seek to maximise the potential for cross-border cancer services, building on the project to provide services to Donegal

The Government and the Northern Ireland Executive wish to build on the Service Level Agreement which is in place to facilitate the referral of radiation oncology patients from Donegal to Belfast City Hospital. This agreement significantly reduces journey time for many patients who would otherwise have to travel to Dublin for treatment. Uptake of these closer services has increased since the scheme's inception, with twenty-five patients from Donegal availing of the services in Belfast by March 2008.

In April 2008, the Northern Ireland Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety announced that a new satellite radiotherapy centre would be established at

Altnagelvin in Derry City, with the potential for cross-border cooperation to enhance services throughout the North West.

A strategic report on future cooperation in the health sector is currently in the advanced stages of preparation and is due to be considered by Ministers North and South in the coming weeks. This report is expected to consider further the potential for enhanced cross-border cancer services.

Support the significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the border region.

The Government recently announced €893,000 in funding for Letterkenny Institute of Technology to develop a strategic alliance with the University of Ulster under the Strategic Innovation Fund. The award will go towards a scoping study on the potential for cooperation with the University of Ulster (due by end 2008) and a blueprint on how significant additional capacity might be achieved (due by end 2009).

The University of Ulster at Magee and Letterkenny Institute of Technology have also jointly developed and are delivering an MSc in Innovation Management in the Public Sector. This programme is jointly accredited by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in the South and the University of Ulster in the North.

The Department of Education and Science continues to support apprenticeship training jointly provided by the Institute of Technology Sligo and the Fermanagh Institute of Further Education.

Intensify our efforts to promote graduate mobility, graduate retention and access to people from disadvantaged areas to higher education

The Government approved, in January 2008, a Bill to provide a statutory basis for student grant schemes. The Bill safeguards the provision of a grant towards maintenance and fees for eligible Southern students undertaking postgraduate research in Northern Ireland.

In 2007, the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland agreed to set aside the proposed introduction of fees for Southern residents seeking access to study in further education institutions in Northern Ireland. This decision guarantees access to free further education in Northern Ireland for Southern students on an equal basis with students domiciled in Northern Ireland.

Complete the rebuilding of all border crossings destroyed during the Troubles.

There are two remaining closed cross border roads on the Co. Monaghan/Tyrone border; at Knockaginney and Annaghroe. Agreement has been reached between Monaghan County Council and the Northern Ireland Authorities on the re-opening of these roads, which includes the replacement of two bridges. Expressions of interest

for a design and build contract are currently being sought, with a view to construction beginning in early 2009. A steering group, on which Monaghan County Council and NI Roads Service are represented, meets regularly to oversee progress.

Complete the development of Derry Airport, for which we have already committed almost €11 million.

The Government decided in 2007 to increase its funding for the runway safety project at Derry City Airport to €10.87 million. The Government's contribution is matched by the Northern Ireland Executive under co-funding arrangements agreed in March 2005.

Support for the City of Derry Airport project is overseen by the Minister for Transport and Northern Ireland's Minister for Regional Development, through the North/South Ministerial Council. A first payment by the Government of €1.6 million to the City of Derry Airport in respect of the project was made in February 2008, following undertakings from Derry City Council in relation to new governance arrangements for the Airport.

Sectarianism

Establish a new Anti-Sectarianism Fund to assist projects in interface areas designed specifically to address the root cause of sectarianism and to defuse tensions.

On 27 February 2008, the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced the launch of the Anti-Sectarianism Fund. The purpose of the Anti-Sectarianism Fund is to assist local efforts aimed at tackling sectarianism, supporting projects in communities seeking new and more effective ways of addressing sectarianism and division in society. A sum of €1 million was made available to assist suitable projects during 2008. To date €400,000 has been allocated from the fund. A further round of allocations will take place in the autumn.

Increase the Reconciliation Fund to €5 million to improve dialogue between the nationalist and unionist traditions and develop capacity building amongst communities affected by the Troubles, including a focus on isolated border communities.

To give effect to the commitments in the Good Friday Agreement the budget of the Reconciliation Fund was increased eight-fold since 1999. The overall budget allocation for 2008 is €3 million, in line with 2007 levels. €1.5 million has been already allocated in 2008, with a further round of allocations to take place in the autumn.

Provide additional staff and resources to the British Irish Secretariat to improve monitoring of sectarian incidents in the North and improve liaison with the PSNI.

The optimum levels of monitoring of sectarian incidents and liaison with the authorities in the North, including with the PSNI, are being maintained, including through enhanced cooperation and shared deployment of resources by the British Irish Secretariat in Belfast and the Department's Anglo-Irish Division.

Monitor progress and press for full and timely implementation of the Triennial Programme of the Shared Future.

The devolved institutions remain in the process of analysing the implementation of the Triennial Action Plan. Contacts continue at official level with the political parties in the North, and other stakeholders, to press for timely and effective implementation of the Action Plan or other equivalent measures

Review all funding for education and community projects to see where a greater impact can be made on tackling sectarianism.

A process of consultation is ongoing with the relevant Government departments to identify current funding for education and community projects and to identify new possibilities to tackle sectarianism through such projects.

Policing

Monitor the full implementation of the Patten Reforms.

The Patten recommendations have been largely implemented, with certain reform processes ongoing. Continued 50-50 recruitment to the PSNI is being monitored.

Preparations for the devolution of policing and justice are underway. While the St Andrews target of May 2008 has passed, discussions are continuing between the main parties in the North on a timeframe for devolution, with broad agreement achieved between the DUP and Sinn Féin on a possible Ministerial model, and all parties agreed on the powers to be devolved. High level contacts continue to encourage further progress.

Press for increased Garda – PSNI co-operation including common police training where appropriate

Ongoing excellent operational day-to-day Garda-PSNI cooperation continues. Personnel exchanges are underway, including between training colleges. The levels

of cooperation will be built upon in the context of devolution of policing and justice powers. In October 2007, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform made a submission to the Stormont Assembly Committee looking at devolution on future North-South cooperation in the context of devolved responsibility for police and justice.

Provide continued support for the work of the Police Ombudsman.

Close and high level contact with the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is being maintained. The importance of adequate arrangements to secure the independence and resourcing of the office, in the context of devolved responsibility for policing and justice, is consistently highlighted in contacts.

Demilitarisation

Press for the complete implementation of the British Army demilitarisation. Negotiate for further reductions in troop numbers, beyond the Programme targets.

The security normalisation programme was completed in July 2007, and current troop levels are below the 5,000 programme target. The British Government has committed to the closure of four bases by the end of 2008, in addition to commitments in the security normalisation programme. The potential for further progress is being pursued on an ongoing basis.

Fund an international competition for a permanent landmark peace monument to be located in the border region.

A Project Steering Group, including the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of Public Works has been established to oversee the implementation of the project. The location of the proposed Peace Monument at a site at Carrickcarnon in Co. Louth, on the border with Co. Armagh, has been approved by the Government, subject to the necessary planning requirements.

Press for the full decommissioning of loyalist and dissident republican weapons.

Public and private pressure for decommissioning and a complete end to paramilitarism by all groups is being maintained. While progress has been made by the UVF and UDA in putting weapons beyond use, emphasis is being given in contacts with loyalist representatives for the need for concrete delivery on decommissioning.

IRELAND IN THE WORLD

United Nations – Ireland the Model UN Member State

Continue Ireland's strong support for the primacy of the UN in international affairs and of UN reform.

On 2 October 2007, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern T.D., delivered the annual address to the UN General Assembly, which highlighted and reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to the UN, conflict resolution and UN Reform. The Minister met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the same day.

Ireland continued to play a leading role in UN reform efforts at UN Headquarters and at country level. Ireland acted (with Tanzania) as co-facilitator for System-wide Coherence (SWC) in the UN General Assembly, while Irish Embassies were active in promoting and observing UN reform at country level.

The Irish/Tanzanian co-chairs' report on SWC was presented to the President of the General Assembly on 21 July 2008.

Irish Embassies in Vietnam, Tanzania and Malawi actively participated in implementation of the SWC "Delivering as One" UN reform concept. In Vietnam, the Irish Embassy has been chairing the UN donors' group.

Inform the United Nations of Ireland's desire to stay at the forefront of UN reform efforts, placing our full diplomatic resources at the use of the UN.

In submitting the SWC report with Tanzania, Ireland offered its continued services to help reach final agreement in the General Assembly on this important reform.

Support for UN reform has also been an essential element in framework agreements agreed with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR and draft agreements with WHO and UNDP and in relevant bilateral consultations.

Respond rapidly to humanitarian and human rights crises in the developing world.

In 2008, significant funding has been provided to UN Agencies, the Red Cross and Non-Governmental Organisations to respond to natural and man made disasters in the developing world, for example:

- €2.6 million has been provided to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to enable rapid response to sudden on-set emergencies;
- €1 million has been provided to the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAPs) for protracted emergencies;

- €7 million has been provided to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);
- €6 million has been provided to the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), which is the coordinating body for the national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. This grant was to fund a two year partnership arrangement designed to strengthen the response capabilities of national Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies;
- More than €25 million has been provided to a range of NGOs and other agencies in response to various emergencies, including most recently Cyclone Nargis in Burma/Myanmar and in response to the earthquake in Szechuan province, China.

Increase the size and capacity of the Rapid Response Corps, the civilian corps of volunteers trained and equipped by the Irish Government to be on the ground in an area of humanitarian crisis within a short period.

As of the end of July 2008, there were 76 members trained and ready for deployment with 11 of those actually on deployment. A new round of interviews was held in August 2008 with a new training course scheduled for October 2008 to further increase the numbers and range of skills available within the Rapid Response Corps.

Double the amount of emergency relief supplies held in, and distributed from, our new pre-positioned humanitarian relief centres at the Curragh, Kildare and Brindisi, Italy.

In 2007, there were six disbursements of supplies and in 2008, as of the end of July 2008, there were seven disbursements. The main UN Store is moving from Brindisi to Dubai and Irish stocks will be transferred there for storage. The amount of stocks maintained will be reviewed as part of this move. It is also intended to preposition stocks in the main African store in Accra, Ghana, once it has been completed.

Increase funding to the regional supply depot for Africa, based in Accra, Ghana.

Irish Aid has committed itself to annual funding of up to €400,000 towards the operating costs of the World Food Programme (WFP) regional supply depot for Africa, which is based in Accra. In addition to these costs, a contribution of €600,000 has been made to the WFP towards the construction of the new storage and warehouse facility. A member of the Rapid Response Corps is currently in Accra working as the project manager for the construction phase.

Increase funding by at least €40 million to the Irish Government Emergency Response Fund and increase funding to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.

Over the last two year period 2007/2008, a total of €177 million has been provided through the Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Fund, marking a significant increase in annual funding over the 2006 figure of €60 million. Funding to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund is €2.6 million in 2008, a 13% increase on the amount provided in 2007 and a significant rise from the €10 million provided in 2006.

Work to strengthen the capacity of Irish and international NGOs to respond more quickly to international emergencies.

To date in 2008, over €730,000 has been disbursed to Irish NGOs specifically to help build their organisational capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies. In addition, Irish Aid has introduced a pilot scheme with three of its largest NGO partners to provide each of them with their own Emergency Response Fund which enables them to react immediately to any sudden on-set emergency.

Development Aid

Increase ODA to 0.7% of GNP by 2012. The annual Budget statement will contain an outline of the target for the coming year and a report on progress to date.

Following the budgetary adjustments this summer, the revised allocation to the Irish Aid Vote for 2008 (Vote 29 - International Cooperation) will amount to €769.2 million. An estimated further €130 million is allocated through other Government Departments, which brings the total allocation in 2008 for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to €899 million. Based on current GNP projections, this level of expenditure will mean that ODA in 2008 will reach an estimated 0.55% of GNP.

Ireland continues to be one of the most generous donors in terms of our rate of contribution as a percentage of GNP, compared to our EU partners and other OECD countries, and ensures that Ireland is on track to meet the UN target of 0.7% of GNP to ODA by 2012.

Increase the number of Programme Countries to a minimum of ten by 2012.

An Embassy has been established in Malawi and work on the development programme in that country is well advanced. Malawi is Irish Aid's ninth programme country.

Spend at least €100 million per annum combating HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in the developing world.

The commitment to spend €100 million combating HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases has been fulfilled. Funding to some existing partners has been increased in 2008, most notably the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM). Ireland's work with the Clinton Foundation in Mozambique and Lesotho is making significant progress while other partnerships such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation continue to have a positive impact on the health of children and women.

The Executive Director of the GFATM visited Ireland in April and signed a new three year agreement. A Value for Money and Policy Review of the HIV and AIDS programme has been undertaken and the report will be available during the last quarter of 2008. Preparations are underway for the hosting of the 4th Global Partners' Forum on Children and HIV on 6-7 October in Dublin.

Develop programmes to assist both individuals and institutions to participate in the Aid Programme.

A Micro Projects Scheme, with an upper limit of €20,000 has been established to support development interventions by small Irish based organisations. The 2008 funding allocation of €40 million for the Civil Society Fund has been fully allocated. Guidelines have been developed and published to assist organisations in accessing the funding schemes.

Following the establishment of an Irish Aid Information & Volunteering Centre in Dublin, establish these centres in Cork and Galway.

Since the Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre was opened in January it has attracted over 14,000 visitors, with ninety development and volunteering related events being held in the Centre in the first five months. The schools programme in particular, has been very successful with 107 school groups using the Centre. There has also been great interest in the Centre as a location for hosting temporary exhibitions.

A review of the operation of the Centre will take place in September which will feed into possible feasibility studies for the establishment of Centres in Galway and Cork.

Develop Regional Aid Programmes in Southern and Western Africa to address trans-national threats such as disease and food insecurity.

A Southern Africa Regional Task Team has been set up to guide the establishment of the Regional Programme. The first meeting of the Regional Task Team took place in May. An outline plan for advancing the future Regional Programme has been drafted. A Progress Report will be submitted to the Director General of Irish Aid by December 2008 and a draft regional strategy will be concluded by the end of 2009. This will include recommendations about the institutional structures required to support the implementation of the regional programme.

The Regional HIV programme for Southern and Eastern Africa, implemented through the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa, is yielding significant results. Nine partners are being funded across a range of countries. The focus is on the regional dimensions of HIV and strengthening the capacity of regional agencies and institutions such as SADC to respond to the pandemic. A mid-term review of phase two of the programme is due to be undertaken in September.

Ensure funding mechanisms for NGOs are accessible and simplified. Seek to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU aid

The applications processes for Civil Society grant mechanisms have been streamlined. Guidelines have been developed and published to assist organisations in accessing the funding schemes. The Multi-Annual Programme Scheme, MAPS, provides predictable and long term funding to support five key NGOs.

At all relevant fora, Ireland encourages and will continue to encourage a high proportion of EU aid being allocated to the Least Developed Countries; 100% untied aid; and greater coherence in development cooperation at EU level.

Ireland supported EU Council Conclusions on ‘The EU - a global partner for development; Speeding up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals’ and also contributed to discussions on the EU’s ‘Agenda for Action on the MDGs’ (May 2008), strongly encouraging Member States to honour their commitments. Ireland has also been pro-active in contributing to the EU position on the drafts of the Accra Agenda for Action for the September 2008 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

Act on the findings of the Hunger Task Force.

The Government has appointed a Hunger Task Force, comprising fifteen national and international experts, to identify the additional, appropriate and effective contributions that Ireland can make to international efforts to reduce hunger and thus achieve the first Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty and hunger by 2015.

The report of the Hunger Task Force is due to be launched in September 2008, following which the Government will prepare its response to the recommendations outlining how the Government proposes to act on them.

Support the fight against corruption in developing countries by supporting institutions, NGOs and civil society. (African Peer Review Mechanism)

Anti-corruption measures are in place in all of Irish Aid's Country Strategy Programmes, including support for oversight bodies such as Parliaments, Auditors General and Ombudsmen, as well as initiatives to strengthen public financial management.

At international level, the Association of Western European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) and the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) are helping to strengthen parliamentary oversight capacity in developing countries, with continuing Irish Aid support. A funding agreement with the leading anti-corruption NGO, Transparency International, is in its second year. Support is also being provided at country level to other international and national NGOs engaged in monitoring and holding governments to account.

A draft proposal for support to the African Peer Review Mechanism awaits completion pending receipt of additional financial information. A new strategy for good governance has been finalised and will be published in the second half of 2008.

Provide financial support for events to mark Africa Day, 25 May.

This year saw the most extensive range of activities around the country to mark Africa Day. In line with the commitment in the White Paper, Irish Aid supported these events, which promoted a positive image of Africa and raised awareness of the ties between Ireland and the continent.

In 2008, support was provided to cultural, community and sporting events in 21 counties marking Africa Day. A flagship Irish Aid event at Dublin Castle, celebrating African music and culture, included participation by African embassies and community groups. It is estimated that over 30,000 people participated in Africa Day events nationwide, including 9,000 at Irish Aid's Dublin Castle event.

Ensure that the sourcing of Fair Trade goods where possible is part of all Government Departments' purchasing policy.

The commitment in the Programme for Government has been brought to the attention of purchasers in all Government Departments and public bodies via the e-procurement network maintained by the Department of Finance, and information on the initiative is available on the Government's procurement portal website at www.etenders.gov.ie.

Irish Aid continues to support the Fair Trade movement internationally and in Ireland. This support includes funding from the Development Education Funding Scheme which goes to increase public awareness through educational materials and events

including Fairtrade Fortnight and Fairtrade Towns. Several local authorities and public bodies have participated in these initiatives, including Dublin City Council which received the award of "Fairtrade Capital City" status from Fairtrade Ireland in February of this year.

Specific guidance on sourcing of Fair Trade products has been issued to the Department's Business Units at headquarters and to Missions abroad. The Department will continue its efforts to source fair trade products where it is practicable to do so and where it is consistent with their obligations under EU and national public procurement rules.

Adopt an integrated approach to development across all Government Departments.

The Inter-Departmental Committee on Development, which was established in April 2007, is working to strengthen coherence in the Government's approach to development and to make best use of the expertise and skills available across the public service. The Committee is chaired by Mr. Peter Power, T.D., Minister of State for Overseas Development. All Government Departments are represented. Six meetings of the Committee have been held and it has established itself as a key forum to share knowledge on development issues across the civil service.

The Committee has considered issues such as Climate Change and Ireland's engagement with the World Bank; a coherent inter-departmental approach to Irish policy in multilateral fora; raising awareness of development issues across the civil service through in-house seminars and the potential for utilising Irish public sector skills in developing countries. It has engaged with a variety of stakeholders including presenting at two Oireachtas Committees.

The Committee presented its first Annual Report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in June 2008, reviewing its activities since its inception and making recommendations to strengthen coherence in the Government's approach to development.

Conflict Resolution

Establish an Academic Centre for Conflict Resolution, to provide academic and analytical expertise in this area.

The development of an Academic Centre for Conflict Resolution will help in mobilising Irish academic and civil society resources in support of enhanced conflict resolution activities overseas. Drawing on an analysis of international best practice, outline models for the configuration of an Irish academic centre have been identified.

Irish academic institutions have been invited to participate in a consultation process to inform plans for the establishment of the centre and to ensure that, when established, it draws from and develops existing national expertise and experience in this area.

Establish an annual €25 million Stability Fund, overseen by the Conflict Resolution Unit.

The Department's Stability Fund has been significantly enhanced with the allocation of additional funding to support conflict resolution initiatives. Allocations have been made from this fund to support the operational activities of the Conflict Resolution Unit; international organisations working in the area of conflict, including initiatives of the United Nations and OECD; and Irish and international NGOs active in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Establish a system of roving ambassadors to crisis regions

Nuala O'Loan has been appointed as the first Roving Ambassador, with the role of Special Envoy for Conflict Resolution in Timor-Leste. Her mandate is to advise the Minister for Foreign Affairs on opportunities for enhanced Irish engagement in conflict resolution activities there, supporting the work of the Government of Timor-Leste and the United Nations in building sustainable peace.

The Special Envoy has completed a substantive visit to Timor-Leste and submitted an interim report to the Minister making preliminary observations and recommendations on appropriate Irish conflict resolution initiatives there. She was accompanied on her visit by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the International Fund for Ireland, who made available expertise on the Northern Ireland peace process and peacebuilding initiatives on the island of Ireland.

Fund a number of fourth level scholarships in the conflict resolution area

A scheme of doctoral scholarships in the conflict resolution area has been established by the Department in partnership with the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Research proposals were assessed by an international panel of academics, and two scholarships have been awarded in the initial year of the scheme. The first scholarship recipients will begin their research work in Irish institutions in the autumn of 2008.

Cluster Bombs

This Government will campaign for a complete ban on the use of cluster munitions. In the absence of a full ban we will seek agreement on an immediate freeze on the use of cluster munitions pending the establishment of effective international instruments to address humanitarian concerns regarding their use.

The formal Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions, to negotiate a new treaty, was hosted and chaired by Ireland. It was opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheal Martin T.D., in Dublin in May 2008. Over 100 States adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which will be opened for signature in Oslo in December 2008. The Convention effectively bans all cluster munitions which have ever been used and also provides ground-breaking provisions for victim assistance and clearance of contaminated areas. It represents a major advance in international humanitarian law.

The Government is committed to early legislation to give domestic effect to the new Convention, and the aim is to have this enacted in time to enable Ireland to sign and ratify the treaty in December. It is also proposed to take the opportunity of this new legislation to make further provision for the State's obligations under the Ottawa (Anti-Personnel Mine) Convention.

Burma

Ireland will not establish diplomatic relations with Burma until Aung San Suu Kyi is released.

In the past year, there has been a serious deterioration of the situation in Burma: with a heavy crackdown by the regime against peaceful protests in September 2007; devastation wreaked by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 and the holding of a discredited constitutional referendum the same month.

Action taken by the Government in the course of the year has included:

- Increased diplomatic activity at Ministerial and senior official level with Burma's neighbours and in international fora.
- Intensified efforts within the EU to enhance the EU's role, including the extension of sanctions against the regime, agreed in December 2007.
- Strong support for an intensified role for the UN, including the mission of the Special Envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, and greater involvement by the UN Secretary General personally.
- Continuing liaison and cooperation with Burma's democratically elected Government – the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, whose Prime Minister, Sein Win, and other senior representatives visited Ireland during the year and met the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Close cooperation with, and support for, the Burma Action Ireland lobby group, including financial support for their publications and hosting of events to promote their activities. Active support was provided for the Burmese community in Ireland, including welcoming new Burmese refugees to live in Ireland. Financial support was also given to the Irish Human Rights Centre at National University of Ireland Galway for research into human rights violations by the Burmese army in ethnic areas.

- In response to Cyclone Nargis (3 May) Ireland provided €1 million for international emergency relief effort and organised two airlifts of essential humanitarian supplies from stockpiles in Brindisi, Italy and the Curragh.

Darfur

Focus urgent international attention on the crisis in Darfur.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Sudan and Chad from 14-16 November 2007 and conveyed Ireland's concerns about the situation in Darfur to the authorities in both countries. At the end of 2007, Ireland provided €500,000 in financial support to the ongoing UN/African Union-mediated Darfur peace talks.

Ireland has participated actively in political and official level discussion on Sudan with our EU partners. The EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) has frequently discussed Sudan.

The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Sudan was extended in December 2007, and Ireland and the EU highlighted concerns about renewed violence and ongoing human rights violations in Darfur at the Human Rights Council in March 2008.

Ireland has contributed approximately 400 troops to EUFOR Tchad/RCA, which is contributing to humanitarian protection in Chad and is addressing regional instability arising from the Darfur crisis. The EUFOR Tchad/RCA mission reached Initial Operational Capacity on 15 March 2008.

Middle East

With the EU and the broader international community, we will press for dialogue, reconciliation and negotiations leading to a two-State solution.

Ireland has been active at meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) and the official level working groups in the formulation of EU policy, at the UN, and directly with the parties in the region in promoting the conditions for restoration of momentum to the peace process and in highlighting the need for progress on humanitarian and human rights issues.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheal Martin T.D., visited the region in July and met with leading political figures in Egypt, the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. At these meetings the Minister emphasised Ireland's strong support for a lasting and peaceful comprehensive settlement to the interlinked problems of the region. He also reaffirmed Ireland's position that the heart of any settlement must be a negotiated two-State solution, with the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State

Extraordinary Rendition

Ireland will seek EU and international support to address deficiencies in aspects of the regulation of civil aviation under the Chicago Convention.

Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Transport, the lead Department on matters concerning regulation of civil aviation, have held a number of meetings to discuss options for addressing deficiencies in aspects of the regulation of civil aviation. Subsequently, the Department of Transport hosted a meeting of the ABIS subgroup, a subgroup of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) at which the matter of extraordinary rendition and the Chicago Convention was discussed.

The Department of Transport prepared a paper that was submitted to the full ABIS group, who in turn agreed to submit it for discussion at European Civil Aviation Conference (the regional body of 42 European ICAO members). Liaison with Department of Transport is ongoing in relation to this and other related issues. Progress in this area will continue to be dependent on the willingness of the international community to re-visit the relevant international agreements.

The Government will prioritise effective enforcement of
a) Criminal Justice (United Nations Convention Against Torture) Act, 2000
b) The Geneva Conventions Acts 1962-1998.

Department of Foreign Affairs officials met with representatives of Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and An Garda Síochána to discuss enforcement of these Conventions. The Garda authorities have taken steps to ensure that all members of An Garda Síochána are appropriately trained in and familiar with the relevant legislation to ensure that this specific obligation under the Programme for Government is met.

Liaison is ongoing with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on matters related to extraordinary rendition.

Disarmament and the Arms trade

Continue to press for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Ireland is actively engaged in the preparations for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 2010 Review Conference and participated in the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Conference in Geneva in May. We continue to work closely with our New Agenda Coalition partners to make a strong contribution to the process. As a further contribution to achieving a positive outcome, Ireland hosted the Middle Powers Initiative Article VI Forum in Dublin Castle in March.

Support a binding and comprehensive global treaty on the trade of arms, covering all weapons and ammunition, and a binding, strengthened EU code of conduct for arms exports.

The UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), of which Ireland is not a member, has met a number of times this year and will report to the UN General Assembly in October, at which stage it is hoped that broader negotiations will be launched.

Ireland will participate in eventual negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty and continues to work actively within the UN and with our EU partners to advance this objective and to achieve a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms.

Strengthen controls on military exports and to regulate arms-brokering activities in Ireland through the enactment of the Control of Exports Bill.

The Control of Exports Act 2008 (No. 1 of 2008) was enacted on 27 February 2008 and entered into force on 5 May 2008. Work is currently progressing on secondary legislation to give full effect to the provisions of the Act.

Irish Abroad

Increase funding for emigrant welfare to €34 million per annum.

A record €15.183 million has been made available for emigrant services this year. This figure is three times greater than the 2004 allocation, and is a clear reflection of the Government's ongoing commitment to the welfare of Irish people abroad. The Government is committed to incrementally increasing funding levels to groups working with our emigrant communities, subject to overall budgetary considerations.

The Irish Abroad Unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs has made consistent progress in meeting the ambitious targets set for it and is now well recognized as the most appropriate body to advance development of enhanced and proactive services for our emigrant communities.

The capacity of the Unit and that of the network of Diplomatic Missions which support and coordinate the Programme has also increased, ensuring that the additional resources continue to be allocated and monitored efficiently. This was confirmed by a Value for Money and Policy Review of the Support for Emigrant Groups Programme, which was completed in July 2007 by Goodbody Economic Consultants.

Maintain the momentum in the campaign for the undocumented Irish.

The Government continues to attach the highest importance to resolving the plight of our undocumented citizens in the United States. Following the failure of the US Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation last June, despite the strong endorsement and encouragement of President Bush, the Government set about exploring with key US Administration and Congressional contacts possible alternative bilateral options.

Notwithstanding that immigration has become a sensitive political issue in the United States, the Government continues to campaign strongly for the undocumented Irish. The Government supports the establishment of bilateral immigration arrangements between Ireland and the United States in the context of our growing economic links and the very strong links between our two peoples.

Complete the process whereby RTÉ can broadcast into the UK.

RTÉ's new international service is scheduled to be on air in Britain by November 2008. While current contractual arrangements will in most cases preclude the transmission of sports events and acquired programming, the service will provide some of the programmes most sought by the Irish in Britain, including news and current affairs, and most of RTÉ's indigenously produced programming.

This new service will be provided through a digital satellite TV service called Freesat. Freesat is available without subscription to almost every household across Britain and Northern Ireland. This new international service will provide the Irish abroad, particularly the elderly and isolated members of our community in Britain, with a valuable link to home.

Work to deliver free public transport for emigrant pensioners when they visit Ireland.

The Government continues to be fully committed to extending the free public transport scheme to Irish emigrants of pensionable age when visiting Ireland. The Irish Abroad Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs, working closely with our network of Missions in EU Capitals, has researched the type of provisions made in other EU countries to subsidise pensioners' travel, and the extent to which any such subsidies extend to all or some EU nationals.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs have been made aware of these findings, and are set to consider the information in greater depth, in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

IRELAND IN EUROPE

Vigorously oppose all moves towards harmonisation of taxation, especially corporation tax.

It had been anticipated that the European Commission would publish draft legislation on the issue of tax harmonisation in 2008 but this may not now happen. The Department of Foreign Affairs works closely with the Department of Finance in lobbying Member States in order to develop partnerships which could effectively oppose moves towards tax harmonisation. Bilateral meetings at both official and political level are continuing.

Building on the Ireland's Rapid Response Corps, we will promote a European Civil Peace Corps to assist in humanitarian disasters

Ireland's own Rapid Response Corps is now fully operational and lessons learnt from that exercise will be fed into any larger similar initiative at European level should it be developed.

Ensure that Ireland does not become involved in an EU common defence.

The Constitutional prohibition on Ireland joining an EU common defence remains in place. Indeed, the unsuccessful Constitutional amendment on ratification of the Lisbon Treaty contained a provision that further reaffirmed our Constitutional prohibition. There is, in any case, no proposal for a common EU defence. Ireland will continue to play an active role in European security and defence policy and will ensure that it continues to develop in line with our traditions and values.

Support moves to increase competitiveness within the Union through developing research and knowledge capacities, as well as promoting competition.

The Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation of July 2006 outlines Irish ambitions to increase competitiveness within the EU. The Strategy is currently being implemented and, according to the EU Report, "Key Figures 2007 on Science Technology and Innovation", Ireland is among a small group of countries likely to meet its targets. This commitment is exemplified by the NDP 2006 -2013 which provides for investment of €2 billion in research and development across the economy.

Propose further measures to improve the quality of communications between the Union and its citizens.

The Department of Foreign Affairs' "Communicating Europe Initiative" funding for 2007 and 2008 has been fully allocated. In addition, the European Commission's Office in Dublin has been active on the communication front.

On foot of the recent referendum result, the Department of Foreign Affairs commissioned a research project to analyse current public attitudes toward the European Union in Ireland, as well as to understand the reasons underlying voting decisions in the referendum on 12 June 2008. It should also provide key insights for on-going communications about Ireland's role within the European Union. The results are expected to be published in September 2008.

Support efforts to implement a cross-Union approach to energy security and climate change.

Ireland favours an integrated EU Climate and Energy policy. The Department of Foreign Affairs contributes to policy development on climate change and energy security, through participation in domestic policy formulation and international negotiations. The Department works closely with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the EU Climate Change Package with the aim of securing the possible outcomes for Ireland.

Ireland's position is in accordance with the Commission Communication of 10 October 2007 on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU. As part of the Government's commitment to the process, measures on individual maritime activities are being implemented by several Government Departments.

Maintain a vigorous stance in defence of Irish maritime communities in all EU Fisheries discussions.

The Government is committed to ensuring a sustainable future for our oceans and seas and the Government strives to develop an integrated approach and greater inter-Departmental cooperation in relation to EU and domestic maritime issues.

Ireland supports the Commission Communication of 10 October 2007 on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU. At a practical level the Government actively coordinates the implementation of individual measures under this policy.

Issue an annual call for proposals to assist local events commemorating Europe Day.

A newspaper and internet advertisement was published in January 2008 inviting proposals for Europe Day events. In all, 24 projects were finally approved and funding of €13,000 allocated to them under the Communicating Europe Initiative.

Aim to have Ireland consistently within the top group on the EU internal Market Scoreboard which monitors transposition of EU Directives.

The Minister for European Affairs chairs the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on EU Affairs which monitors Ireland's performance in relation to transposition of EU measures.

Ireland achieved its best result to date with a 1% deficit (i.e. the new target set by the European Council to be achieved by 2009) for the most recent Internal Market Scoreboard. It is intended to encourage speedier transposition of EU measures so as to ensure that Ireland will be consistently within the top group of Member States in relation to the implementation of EU measures.

Support EU moves to ensure airlines have transparent fares, including all taxes and fees, that they end the practice of charging different prices in different states for the same flight and introduce safer flying regulations.

Ireland supports the revision of the 3rd Aviation Package which will provide for elements of this objective. Ireland will support political agreement at Council level in the hope of agreeing this measure in 2008.

Press for increased EU supports and more ambitious targets for renewable energy.

Ireland broadly supports the EU's attempts to adopt national targets in line with the conclusions of 2007 Spring European Council. These negotiations are expected to result in targets being published by the Commission in 2008.

Ensure the continuation of EU funding to underpin the Peace Process.

The Taoiseach-elect and Minister Peter Robinson formally launched the new EU Programmes in Belfast in April 2008 and welcomed the report of the EU Task Force on Northern Ireland. The PEACE III Programme (2007-2013) will see Northern Ireland and the border counties in the South benefit from a new seven-year €333 million Programme, made up of €225 million in additional funding from the European Union, along with national contributions of €108 million

The PEACE III Programme will be complemented by the Ireland/Northern Ireland/Scotland Territorial Cooperation Programme (INTERREG IVA), with a total budget of €256 million over 2007-2013 (including matched funding of €64 million). INTERREG IVA will support many of the same types of activity as its predecessor including improving public services and quality of life in the eligible region, and will retain a strong business and economic focus.

The EU also continues to offer strong support for the International Fund for Ireland. Over the past 20 years the Fund has contributed over €50m to projects aimed at building peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland. The projects supported by the Fund have brought together communities, aided young people in overcoming disadvantage and sectarianism, and countered the economic and social consequences of division and violence.

Support moves to minimise EU bureaucracy.

Ireland is fully supportive of the “Better Regulation Initiative”. The Commission is expected to make fresh proposals in this area. Our ambition is to see a 25% reduction in the administrative burden on the business sector by 2012.

Support moves toward a single European Mortgage Market.

The Commission had been expected to publish a White Paper on this issue by the end of 2007. However, no progress has been made on the issue and it is not expected that the White Paper will be published before the next Commission is appointed in 2009.

Department of Foreign Affairs
September 2008