**Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.**

**A consultancy study on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights (A/HRC/RES/41/19, para. 13)**

**Submission of Ireland**

**February 2021**

**1. Please share your views on the contribution of development in promoting and protecting human rights, including its context, concept, specific aspects and means of implementation.**

Contribution of development to:

1. Civil and political rights.
2. Economic, social and cultural rights.
3. The right to peace, the right to development, environmental rights, and digital rights.

The EU and its Member States, the largest providers of Official Development Assistance in the world, consider that sustainable and inclusive development and human rights are interlinked, mutually reinforcing and complementary. As enshrined in Art. 10 of the Vienna Declaration, development facilitates the enjoyment of all human rights, however the lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally recognized human rights. Ireland believes that sustainable and inclusive development cannot be achieved without respect for and protection and fulfilment of all human rights.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[[1]](#footnote-1), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it contains, are underpinned by human rights principles and offer opportunities to advance the realisation of human rights for all. Threats to human rights and civil society space undermine the basis for peaceful, sustainable development in many contexts. Effective and accountable institutions, underpinned by strong governance and adherence to the rule of law are thus central to the realisation of human rights. A human rights framework can also help to address the causes and consequences of poverty.

The protection and promotion of human rights has been a longstanding and central priority of Ireland’s foreign and development policy. Ireland’s international development policy, *A Better World[[2]](#footnote-2),* commits to ensure that human rights principles and standards are promoted, protected and integrated in all our development efforts. Our traditional support for policies, which advance human rights, and combat poverty and hunger, alongside our commitment to peacekeeping and disarmament remain essential to building a secure, stable world where people can live in dignity and without fear. Ireland has long worked to promote democracy and governance to build and sustain peace and security, to promote and protect human rights and the rule of law.

**2. How to ensure that development contributes to promoting and protecting human rights?** (The principles, strategies, policies and laws, action plans and programmes of development, what contents are important and what responsibilities should be taken into account)

1. (1)  At the international level.
2. (2)  At the national level.
3. (3)  Through global and regional partnerships, civic space and engagement.

**International Level**

Ireland provides dedicated thematic funding for human rights, the rule of law and democracy, as core elements of achieving sustainable development. We support projects that directly, and visibly, target human rights issues such as LGBTI+ rights, natural resource exploitation, and strengthening civil society.

We also mainstream human rights across all areas of work, systematically integrating human rights in all sectors of development cooperation and supporting the realisation of human rights through development programming. The principle of ‘Leave No One behind’, which underpins the SDGs, provides an important platform through which we can mainstream and integrate core human right principles of equality, non-discrimination and justice throughout our interventions.

Continuing to invest in strengthening governance for effective institutions is a priority as these are the building blocks for creating systems that deliver sustainable outcomes and realise human rights over the longer term.

It is important that any funding and interventions are situated in a robust political economy understanding of the context, including a ‘do no harm’ approach in particular when working with vulnerable groups.

Promoting national ownership is one of the key principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[[3]](#footnote-3). Ownership is the best strategy to guarantee that a development project succeeds and has the best opportunity of reaching the furthest behind first.

In line with international best practice and the principles of sustainability and ownership, Ireland continues to promote the important principle of partnerships with local civil society in developing countries. The 2020 OECD Development Assistance Committee Peer Review of Ireland[[4]](#footnote-4) found that ‘a long-lasting commitment to engaging in partnerships is the trademark of Ireland’s development co-operation and that ‘partnerships with Irish and local civil society organisations (CSOs) are characterised by mutual trust and an open culture of substantive and regular dialogue.’

Ireland’s commitment, support to and engagement with the UN and the broader multilateral system is a central tenet of its foreign and development policies and means of doing business, including provision of political and financial support to a range of international human rights institutions, such as the UN Human Rights Council, Commission on the Status of Women and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, as well as the OHCHR, Universal Periodic Review and the Treaty bodies.

At a regional level, Ireland also provides support to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human rights, and the European Court of Human Rights.

Ireland’s humanitarian assistance is informed by a respect for human rights and the international legal frameworks, which exist to help define and protect the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of States. Key legal frameworks include international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law.

At an international level, Ireland regularly reports to the UN on the Conventions we are a party to, and present progress reports on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York.

**National Level**

Ireland remains committed to the fulfilment of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Goals cover a wide range of issues such as civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; and the right to peace, the right to development, environmental rights, and digital rights.

Ireland has incorporated the SDGs into domestic policies, programmes, and strategies, with a whole of Government approach to their implementation.

*First SDG National Implementation Plan (2018-2020)*

The first SDG National Implementation Plan (2018-2020)[[5]](#footnote-5), published in 2018, set out Ireland’s strategy to achieve the SDGs both domestically and internationally. The Goals are mainstreamed in domestic policy and the governance structure reflects this whole-of-government approach and ensures coordination and coherence, in particular, where goals cover areas of shared responsibility.

An important element of the first Plan is the SDG Policy Map[[6]](#footnote-6), which mapped national sectoral policies against the 17 SDGs and all 169 related targets, in order to identify which policies are most relevant to which SDGs and their associated targets.

The SDG Policy Map enhances the ability of stakeholders to track Ireland’s implementation of specific SDGs and associated targets, and to assess Ireland’s response to the SDGs for potential policy gaps. It also supports and enhances cross-Government engagement in implementing each of the Goals and Targets.

*Preparations for Second Implementation Plan*

Given the extensive reach of the 17 Goals, ensuring and improving policy coherence across the Goals will be another critical feature and area for consideration. In this regard, the SDG Policy Map is being revised and enhanced to facilitate further engagement and coherency. It is intended to remain a living document and be updated regularly.

*Civic and stakeholder engagement*

A commitment under the Plan was to establish a SDG Stakeholder Forum to inform further development of the national SDG framework and to provide a mechanism for stakeholders from all sectors to engage, on an ongoing basis in national implementation of the Goals. It was established in 2018 and informs the development of the national SDG framework through academic, sectoral and civil society participation at regular meetings.

**3. Please share any concrete examples of best practices of contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights.** Challenges, obstacles, lessons learned and experience with regard to principles, strategies, law and policies, action plans and programmes, the role of communities, organizations, and individuals and/or other stakeholders.

*Africa Agri-Food Development Programme*

The Africa Agri-Food Development Programme (AADP) is a government initiative that seeks to develop partnerships between the Irish Agri-Food Sector and African countries to support sustainable and mutual trade between Ireland and Africa.

The AADP’s application process requires all applicants to demonstrate in the application form how their proposals will adhere to guidelines on responsible business practices including Ireland’s National Plan on Business and Human Rights[[7]](#footnote-7) and the OECD’s Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises[[8]](#footnote-8). The application forms also require applicants to provide details of any possible impact the project could have on land rights or land tenure for local communities.

In addition to the provisions within the AADP applications form, prospective applicants are subject to further assessment at interview stage when the AADP’s Evaluation Committee has the opportunity to seek further clarification from the statements and information provided by the applicants in their forms and seek further clarity with regards to the project’s approach to safeguarding human rights.

*Civil Society Fund*

Ireland’s Civil Society Fund provides grants on an annual basis to support NGOs carrying out development projects of between one and three years’ duration. It is primarily aimed at Irish development NGOs but a limited number of international NGOs, focusing on human rights, are also supported. Projects currently funded are addressing issues such as the protection of human rights, elimination of sexual exploitation of children, LGBTI+ rights, natural resource exploitation, women and access to information and strengthening civil society.

1. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c20f6995-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c20f6995-en> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://assets.gov.ie/19344/32f9bdd2aae2464caae37760edd1da04.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://assets.gov.ie/19384/7564968d707948289df376cacb37e0bd.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/National-Plan-on-Business-and-Human-Rights-2017-2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/48004323.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)