



# IRELAND

Statement by

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

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**PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS**  
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Mr. President,

Upon its formation earlier this year, the Irish Government set itself the goal of becoming a model Member State of this great organisation.

We have set out an ambitious programme to be a world leader in development assistance, rapid response to humanitarian disasters, and conflict resolution.

Because our own history shows that there is a path from famine to plenty and from conflict to peace.

And from that history has grown a determination, in ordinary Irish men and women, that we should stand in the vanguard of the fight against conflict, and hunger, and the denial of human rights:

A fight best fought by a strong and equally determined United Nations.

A fight, Mr. President, fellow delegates and distinguished guests, we cannot afford to lose.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Because after six decades, the core goal of the United Nations - universal peace and security – still eludes us.

Today, despite all our efforts, violent conflict remains all too common.

The causes of conflict are many. But very often it is in the persistence of poverty and in the denial of human rights that we find

- the causes of conflict
- the enduring results of conflict
- and the seeds of future conflict.

In making peace, we must be as creative and determined as those who wage war.

The range of instruments now available strengthens our collective capacity to resolve conflict.

We must use that full array with determination now.

We must ensure that the United Nations Peace Building Commission and Peace Building Fund are organised and resourced to fulfil their important mandate.

We must maintain our support for United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operations which, today, are at an all time high in terms of their size, scope and complexity.

And we must also support strengthened UN efforts in the fields of conflict prevention and resolution.

We in Ireland will play our part.

My Government has decided significantly to increase its commitment to conflict resolution, including through

- the establishment of a designated Unit in the Foreign Ministry;
- the creation of an academic Centre for Conflict Resolution
- a system of roving Ambassadors to affected regions.
- and an annual €25 million fund to assist conflict resolution in the developing world.

In the years ahead, we will also work to strengthen the capacity of the African Union and sub-regional organisations to make and build peace for themselves.

We will focus our efforts on peace-making during conflict and peace-building after conflict. We will also work on identifying, distilling and sharing the lessons of conflict resolution.

We will be particularly active in Africa, including through working with our partner Governments under our Irish Aid programme.

We will explore the links between climate change and conflict because climate change directly threatens not only the most vulnerable but all of our shared goals of progress, peace and development.

The focus of our foreign policy on rights, development and now conflict resolution underlines once again Ireland's commitment to the UN's global agenda.

### NORTHERN IRELAND AND CONFLICT

But this convergence is also underscored by our own national experience of peace-making.

Speaking here in New York in April 1969, before the appalling escalation of violence in Northern Ireland, one of my distinguished predecessors, Frank Aiken, said "I think there is sufficient wisdom if it can only be energised in our section of the world, in these islands off the North West of Europe, to settle the problem".

For far too long that sufficient wisdom eluded us.

For almost forty years, it has been my duty, and that of my predecessors as Minister for Foreign Affairs, to brief this Assembly on the search for peace on the island of Ireland.

I am delighted to report that, perhaps save for general updates on progress, this will no longer be necessary.

The conflict in Northern Ireland lasted for more than three decades, and was made apparently insoluble by issues of national, cultural and religious identity, contested historical narratives and claims of sovereignty, all hardened by the direct experiences of division, inequality and violence.

Since the ceasefires of the mid-1990s and the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, there has been better news to report. But the final steps to the full implementation of that Agreement were not completed until earlier this year.

With the formation of the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive, bringing together historic opponents from across the political divide, we have opened an extraordinary new chapter in the history of the island of Ireland.

Legacies of separation and distrust remain and the inevitable challenges and difficulties of normal politics will need wise and sensitive management.

But there is an overwhelming consensus that this new beginning can be nurtured and sustained.

The task is no longer to find peace, but to maintain and build on the peace we have found.

I do not believe our success offers a universally transferable formula.

But I do believe that our experience of failure and then success over forty years provides insights and lessons worth sharing. One of the specific tasks of our Conflict Resolution initiative is to codify those insights and lessons. But today I would offer just a few.

First, in the end, those who are part of the problem must be part of the solution – not because we approve of their actions or beliefs, but because without them it is all too easy for an agreement among others to be destroyed.

Secondly, inclusive dialogue has, however, to take place on the basis of clear and guaranteed principles – in Ireland, these were consent, non-violence, and parity of esteem.

Thirdly, partnerships between Governments and involving sympathetic third parties - the United States and the European Union, in our case - can develop comprehensive frameworks within which enduring settlements can be reached.

Fourthly, it is often necessary to take risks for peace – but these risks must be carefully calibrated. Timing is of the essence. So is patience. And there are times when contacts must be private or at arm's-length.

Fifthly, our experience demonstrates the need to address all issues, all of the causes of conflict, comprehensively, no matter how difficult or intractable they may be, and even if they have to be resolved in different timeframes.

Sixthly, popular endorsement of an agreement through the ballot box makes it immensely more legitimate and durable.

Finally, without effective and faithful implementation, again often with external assistance, an agreement's vitality and credibility can quickly ebb away.

On a more practical and operational level, we have devised and implemented innovative arrangements for dealing with many of the issues which dominate peace-making and peace-building: constitutional change, power-sharing, cross-border cooperation, transitional justice, policing and security reform, equality and human rights, conflict over symbols, arms decommissioning and prisoner release.

In our own process, we have learned much from others – for instance, South Africa.

Together, I hope we can, in Frank Aiken's term, develop both 'sufficient wisdom' and sufficient will to resolve enduring and complex conflicts.

Working with a strengthened UN and sharing lessons with one another, I passionately hope we can advance the day when political leaders from other regions of the world blighted by conflict can announce in this forum that peace has come to them too.

Northern Ireland has been added to the list of conflicts resolved. But the road to universal peace is still blocked by conflicts old, new and threatened.



## BURMA/MYANMAR

Today, across the world we stand with the people of Burma.

The courage of the Buddhist monks and nuns and their supporters has won universal admiration.

The efforts of its regime to conceal its brutality behind a wall of silence have failed. It has been rightly condemned for its violent response.

I call on its leaders at long last to respond constructively to the wishes of the people, to stop their violence, and to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners.

The process of national reconciliation and democratisation must begin in earnest and we hope that the Secretary General's Special Envoy will be able to report progress on his return here.

We look to the Security Council to respond effectively to the compelling calls of the international community.

It is neither acceptable nor true to argue, as some of its members have, that the situation in Burma is not a question of international peace and security. The potential regional consequences of the crisis are evident.

This places a particular onus on the governments of China, India, and of the ASEAN countries. I welcome encouraging recent signs of positive and concerned engagement and urge them to redouble their efforts.

Within the European Union, Ireland has long taken a strong and principled position on Burma. We are looking urgently at how to increase the pressure on the regime, including through further EU restrictive measures, without harming the ordinary people whose suffering is already so great.

### DARFUR

As it is for people across the world, Darfur is a matter of grave concern in Ireland. We have made it a priority for our diplomacy and our Irish Aid programme.

We must solve the humanitarian and security crisis while simultaneously establishing the foundations for longer-term peace and development.

We urge the full, effective and speedy deployment of UNAMID.

Khartoum must actively co-operate and at last desist from all obstruction.

Rebel groups must also play their part. The recent attack on peacekeepers in Darfur was an outrage and rightly condemned here. I would like to express my sympathies to the families of those killed.

In keeping with our proud tradition of peace-keeping, Ireland expects to make a substantial contribution to the UN-mandated mission to Chad and the Central African Republic to help aid refugees and address the regional dimension of the Darfur crisis.

All those who are party to the conflict must commit to the political talks in Libya next month. I welcome the Secretary General's establishment of a Trust Fund to support this talks process and here pledge Ireland's support.

If commitments are not fulfilled and progress does not materialise, Ireland will support further sanctions against non-cooperating parties.

### ZIMBABWE

I am gravely concerned at the increasingly serious humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. The current SADC initiative led by President Mbeki offers the best hope of progress and I would encourage all those involved to redouble their efforts to agree a new political dispensation offering real political reform and economic recovery for all Zimbabweans.

### MIDDLE EAST

The situation in the Middle East is always high on our agenda.

There has been a collective international failure to establish a credible political process leading to the two-State solution. But today there are possibilities for change.

The outlines of a viable settlement are clear to everyone, even if it will require difficult and painful compromises.

Ireland strongly supports the dialogue between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. We are also encouraged by the determination of the Arab States to pursue their historic Peace Initiative.

We share the hope that the international meeting now in preparation under Secretary Rice's leadership will indeed be serious and substantive and set in train a transformation of the political landscape and the lives of its people.

### DISARMAMENT

Mr. President,

Ireland's historic commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continues.

But we are active too in seeking a comprehensive response to the curse of cluster munitions, the appalling effects of which are all too evident in Lebanon and elsewhere. As a contribution to the collaborative effort launched in Oslo last February, Ireland will host a Diplomatic Conference in May 2008 which we hope may finalise the first-ever international agreement on cluster munitions.

### DEVELOPMENT

Mr President,

The establishment of the Millennium Development Goals has spurred our efforts to tackle poverty and its consequences.

I greatly welcome the Secretary General's establishment of the MDG Africa Steering Group to lead a determined push to achieve our targets for 2015.

Ireland is doing its part. We are spending more than 0.5% of our GNP on overseas aid and will reach 0.7% by 2012. We have substantially increased our support to humanitarian relief operations and to tackling HIV/AIDS.

But we know that more needs to be done. The donor community is failing the test set by the MDGs. Overseas aid has fallen by 5% in real terms. It is not acceptable in today's world that there are still 980 million living in abject poverty, that half of the developing world has no access to basic sanitation or that half a million women will die in pregnancy or childbirth each year.

Perhaps the most damning fact is that one in seven people on this earth today do not get enough food to eat to have a healthy and productive life. That figure jumps to one in four in sub-Saharan Africa.

To help meet this most basic of challenges, Ireland has established a Hunger Task Force to examine the root causes of this enduring source of misery, disease and death. It will help us contribute to the MDG goal of halving hunger and poverty.

I am delighted that the experts on the Hunger Task Force include Jeffrey Sachs, the Secretary General's Special Adviser on the MDGs.

## CONCLUSION

Mr President,

Ireland will maintain and increase its commitment to the work of the United Nations in the fields of peace and security, development and human rights.

There is no mystery to the challenges facing us, even if they are formidable.

Our generation is uniquely equipped to know what it will take to deal with them.

We have the scientific knowledge, the experience, the resources and, through this organisation, the mechanism for cooperation to rise to these challenges.

We must summon the sufficient wisdom and will to do so.

Thank you.