

# IRELAND

Statement by the Taoiseach,  
Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D.,

at the

High Level Plenary Meeting of the  
General Assembly

United Nations, New York

14 September 2005

*Check against delivery*

Mr. President,

Ireland's support for the United Nations is unwavering. We have always placed the UN at the very centre of our foreign policy. Many Irish soldiers have served under the blue flag, and some have sacrificed their lives in that noble service.

The United Nations is, and will remain, fundamental to the pursuit of global justice, prosperity and security.

Yet all of us here know that the United Nations must change. Of course, its failures are mainly the result of our failures. Too often in recent years, we have not mustered the will and resources — the courage - to match the determination of the UN's founders to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

The many successes of the UN make our failures - failures which have at times been catastrophic — all the more inexcusable.

That is why what we have agreed is so important.

It does not achieve all that Ireland and many others would have hoped for. I regret that the Secretary-General's ambitious vision has not yet been fully realised. But significant progress has been achieved in several areas. And we have established a demanding agenda for the future.

Reform must continue, and change must happen. The realities of our world demand it.

Mr President,

Globalisation has brought enormous benefits. More people have been lifted out of extreme poverty in the past decade than at any time since the UN was founded.

But globalisation also has its dark side. We see the spread of deadly infectious diseases. We see terrorists and organised criminals exploiting a more open world. Along with economic growth have come environmental degradation and climate change.

And globalisation has left over two billion people behind - people who bear the brunt of conflict, of disease, of grinding poverty.

The links between development, security and human rights are clear and inescapable. It is no coincidence that many of the countries furthest from reaching the Millennium Development Goals are those most affected by conflict and by the abuse of human rights.

Mr. President,

We live in a world where the clear distinction between conflict among states and within states has become blurred. Recently, threats to peace have arisen mainly from internal strife. These threats, *as we* have seen to our cost, do not stop at national borders.

We are all sovereign states, with sovereign rights and responsibilities. But where these responsibilities are not exercised to protect citizens from gross abuses or genocide, others must assume them through the UN, including, if all else fails, by military force. We have rightly committed ourselves never to allow events such as those that took place in Rwanda and Srebrenica to happen again.

Where countries have, with our help, taken the first steps out of conflict, we cannot leave them on their own. I welcome therefore our agreement to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, and to have it up and running by the end of the year.

We must intensify our common efforts to deal with terrorism and move quickly to conclude a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

The Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty is of special importance to Ireland as its first signatory. The Treaty's twin goals of disarmament and non-proliferation reinforce each other. I deeply regret the failure to make any progress on this occasion. However, Ireland will continue working to strengthen the Treaty.

Let us quickly make a reality of the new Human Rights Council. Ireland will work to make it fully effective in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The UN Organisation must become more efficient. Its Secretariat, agencies and staff must be fully accountable. The Secretary-General has to have the authority and flexibility to manage the Organisation and to devote resources to where they are most needed. It is not fair to deny him this and then to blame him when things go wrong.

Mr President,

It is an **affront** to our common humanity, five years after the Millennium Summit, that 30,000 children die each day from easily preventable diseases, or that 100 million people go to bed hungry, or that 100 million children are not receiving a basic education.

Ireland is not a silent witness to this continuing tragedy.

Over the past 5 years, my Government has more than doubled Ireland's Official Development Assistance - from E254m to E545m. Indeed, since coming into office my Government has tripled ODA.

Today I recommit Ireland to reaching the UN target of 0.7%. This will be achieved by 2012, three years earlier than the agreed EU target date of 2015. Given current economic projections this will mean a tripling of Ireland's ODA above current levels.

Our commitment is demanding but achievable. And it will be achieved.

As the first milestone on the way to reaching the UN target, I commit the Government to significantly increasing our ODA in the next two years, in order to reach an interim target of 0.5% of our GNP in 2007. This means that we will spend E658 million next year and E773 million on ODA in 2007.

Quantity is important, but so also is quality. Ireland is one of the very few donors *all* of whose aid is untied. Our aid will *remain* untied. Our aid is *effective aid*.

The new money will support new actions:

Firstly, next year, Ireland will double its spending on the fight against HIV/AIDS to E100 million. This builds on the commitment I gave here in 2001 to put the battle against HIV/AIDS at the very centre of our programme.

Secondly, the new resources will allow Ireland to respond more quickly and effectively to major humanitarian emergencies. We will work in partnership with the UN and NGOs to bring relief to victims and to tackle the root causes of hunger.

Thirdly, we will support the UN in creating the new fund to promote democratic values throughout the world. People want to help but they want to be sure their money is being properly used. To ensure that public support for aid remains strong, we must work with developing countries to improve governance, promote human rights, increase *transparency* and stamp out corruption.

And finally, we know from our own experience that reducing poverty needs strong economic growth and a vibrant private sector. We will work together with Irish industry and partner companies in Africa to promote trade, investment and technology transfer.

By committing to the 0.7% target, Ireland will spend up to E8 billion helping to tackle poverty and alleviate poverty in some of the world's poorest countries. By any standards this is a huge commitment on behalf of the Irish people, but I know that they, and especially the young people, will welcome it.

Mr President,

Gathered here, we have pledged to take action to make the world more secure and more just. Now we must follow through. We have taken a step forward, but there is a long road still to travel.

Thank you, Mr. President.