

Speech

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at

**Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Biennial Delegate Conference;
*Sustainable Development Goals, Financing for Development and Climate Change***

7th July - Ennis

I am delighted to be in Ennis today for the Biennial Delegate Conference. I wish to thank ICTU for inviting me to speak at this important session on the post-2015 development agenda.

It has been said of our generation that it is the first one that can end extreme poverty and the last to have a chance of saving the planet. This is because 2015 which has been designated the European Year for Development, has the potential to rank as the most critical in global development in generations.

Three major interlinked international processes are due to conclude in 2015 with the International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in Addis Ababa next week, the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Summit in New York from 25 to 27 September, and the Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Paris in December, which should agree a legally binding and universal climate agreement.

The three processes are interdependent. The agreements from these processes are setting out both the global architecture and the actions required of state and non-state actors to achieve a sustainable planet, where women and men everywhere have the opportunity to forge viable and sustainable lives free from discrimination. The ambition of the new sustainable development agenda is universal, and therefore extremely challenging, covering issues such poverty and hunger, urbanisation, infrastructure, governance, income inequality, and climate change.

The Sustainable Development Goals, which are an outcome of the post 2015 negotiations, are largely agreed at this stage. Ireland and Kenya are currently co-facilitating the final round of UN negotiations in New York to agree the post-2015 development agenda. The overall objective is that agreements in all three processes will deliver a broad new integrated agenda for global development, with targets for 2030.

This vision for the post 2015 development agenda reflects huge ambition as well as huge responsibility. We can be encouraged by the fact that all 193 nations represented at the United Nations are gradually moving toward agreement on how to make these outcomes a reality.

In addition to our role as co-facilitator with Kenya of the final round of inter-governmental negotiations to finalise the post 2015 agenda, Ireland has been centrally involved in this process from the outset. Ireland had a lead role in setting out the parameters for this process at both the EU and at the UN: the Irish EU Presidency brokered agreement on EU Council Conclusions which framed EU engagement on Post-2015, while at the UN, Ireland and South Africa facilitated agreement among member states of an outcome document in September 2013 which framed the road map for the negotiations of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Equally important, Ireland was actively engaged in the United Nations Open Working Group that presented the proposed sustainable development goals and targets.

The SDG's build upon the Millennium Development Goals and contain a commitment to both complete the unfinished business of the MDG's and take on a much broader remit with the aim of fighting poverty, creating just, equitable, peaceful and inclusive societies, and promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Reaching agreement on such a comprehensive agenda has never been attempted before, and will be a huge achievement for humanity if successful.

The negotiations on this agenda have been unprecedented in their inclusiveness, with over 7 million people from around the world having stated their priorities for the goals; all 193 Member States of the United Nations are directly involved in the negotiations and Civil Society has had the opportunity to put forward its views throughout. This is in contrast to

the Millennium Development Goals which were formulated at an expert level with the UN Secretary General. The strong participation of so many in the post 2015 development agenda should help to ensure equally wide ownership of it.

Implementation of the SDGs will be at the national, regional and global level and will require action and a new level of cooperation by and between states, civil society and the private sector. Clichéd as it may sound; it cannot be business as usual in the post 2015 world.

UNCTAD has estimated that global investment needs required for the achievement of the SDGs are of the order of \$5 – 7 trillion annually. The needs of developing countries alone will be in the region of \$3.5 – 4.5 trillion annually, mainly for basic infrastructure, food security, climate change, health and education. The Addis conference which takes place next week, will aim to reach agreement on the financing of sustainable development, extending vastly beyond Official Development Assistance (ODA), and focussing on how to unlock finance from different sources covering funding for infrastructure and climate policies - amongst the many challenges to be addressed in Paris is that around climate change adaptation which remains a key concern for developing countries. Addis will also crucially focus on domestic resource mobilisation for development and, taxation, tackling illicit financial flows and the need to boost world trade talks.

Aid will however; remain critical for the Least Developed Countries. In advance of the Addis Conference Ireland helped broker the agreement by EU Development Ministers at the May EU Foreign Affairs Council to reconfirm the EU's collective commitment to reaching the 0.7% target within the timeframe of the post-2015 development agenda (i.e. 2030), and on the need to direct more aid to the Least Developed Countries, and especially to the poorest African countries. As our economic recovery continues to consolidate and strengthen, the challenge now is to determine how best we can make sustainable progress towards the UN target, as we continue to build on Ireland's world-class aid programme by ensuring we make an effective contribution to the fight to end extreme poverty and hunger.

The SDGs and targets will be a universally-applicable and will be adopted at Summit level in New York in September. One of the draft SDGs, Goal 8, commits all 193 UN Member States to 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'. There are a number of targets associated with this

goal where some further clarification may be required to ensure, for example, that they will be in line with the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and also to clarify that eradication of forced labour refers to all ages, not only to children. We are optimistic that these issues will be agreed and that we will have a strong and ambitious outcome for the Summit in September.

Ultimately, the agenda will be visible through implementation. It will only be successful if it drives progress at local, national and international levels. It will require the involvement of a broad number of stakeholders in implementation and monitoring progress, including civil society, academia and the private sector.

Trade Unions are contributing to the post 2015 negotiations in New York as part of the Major Group for Workers and Trade Unions. Our Ambassador to the UN in his role as co-facilitator has consistently supported space for the major groups as well as other Civil Society contributors at the negotiations, which continues the unique form they have taken since the outset. The representative of the Major Group for Workers and Trade Unions has been setting out the case for strong references to decent work and social justice in the final outcome as well as for prominent reference to human rights.

These are very important issues as we see on a daily basis how human rights violations hamper development, create instability and lead to conflict. All of us – individual, business and State - have a responsibility to defend and protect human rights.

Our efforts to support Civil Society's central role in these negotiations is synonymous with our approach to the important role of civil society in other multilateral fora. Ireland has been a strong supporter 'civil society space' – and has led on this issue in a number of resolutions in the Human Rights Council.

We are aware and appreciative of the efforts that the ICTU has made in influencing the post 2015 agenda, both directly through an advocacy event in New York on the 11th of May, and through partnerships. Your support for democratic state led approaches to the Sustainable Development agenda, the full protection of all Human Rights and ensuring decent work, is extremely important. Promoting the objectives of the Decent Work agenda on rights to work, employment, social protection and social dialogue is central to human and economic

development. It is also central to Ireland's development cooperation programme and has been the basis of our long standing partnership with the ILO.

We note the Union's Major Groups' particular concern regarding the prominence proposed for the private sector in the implementation of the post-2015 agenda.

As mentioned already the breadth and range of the ambition set out in the new SDGs requires a new approach that will unlock other sources of financing for development, including recognising the crucial role that the private sector can play. Business can be a powerful driver for positive change through its ability to generate economic growth and to create jobs, but this must be done within a paradigm that respects human rights. Government can play an important role in assisting companies in meeting human rights standards in today's fiercely competitive business environment. I am proud to say that the Irish Government is currently developing a national plan for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. My Department is leading the development of the plan through an inter-departmental working group. We have now received more than 30 submissions from Civil Society and the Business communities, and our aim is to have a draft plan for further consultation in the autumn.

We are currently in the final phase of the negotiations for the new SDGs and days away from agreeing on the means of implementation for those goals at the Financing for Development Conference in Addis.

And once we have agreed the blueprint to take us forward, then the real work begins.

ICTU and its global partners will have a critical role in implementing this transformative outcome which has the potential to eradicate poverty, shift the world onto a sustainable footing, and ensure that no one gets left behind.

We appreciate the contribution of ICTU and its global partners to date and look forward to continued engagement and support for successful outcomes in the coming days and weeks.

Thank you.