

Just Forests Submission to the Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

Introduction:

Irish Woodworkers for Africa, T/A Just Forests welcomes the public consultation and call for submissions for the Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations. We are a small Irish NGO with particular focus on the significance on Ireland's role in the international trade in timber and wood-based products and wildlife trafficking.

Through our membership of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), we assist the development education sector in Ireland to make a significant contribution to the delivery, reception and public understanding of Ireland's foreign policy, in particular with regard to issues of international trade and development and human rights. We also help to bring and encourage a development education perspective through our membership of the Irish Environmental Network (IEN).

The development education sector in Ireland plays a leading role nationally and in European development education. IDEA members represent a spectrum of civil society and NGO actors. The sector has been recognized by European colleagues as a strong example of good practice in development education¹.

Just Forests wishes the review to take due regard of:

- Ireland's role in the escalating ²international trade in wildlife/ivory/rhino horn that has been linked to international terrorism
- Ireland's role in the international trade in timber and wood-based products – from tropical-temperate and boreal regions which is also linked to armed conflict
- Ireland's role in the global corporate governance of multinationals responsible for tax fraud
- The need to link our foreign policy with the requirements of fair, sustainable and equitable international trade
- Just Forests support the DOCHAS call to government for a 'rights-based' and 'whole of Government' approach to the fight against global poverty
- Just Forests concerns that 'increasing prioritisation of Irish commercial interests in Africa may run counter to its "*Ireland and Africa*" emphasis on', "building local systems and the capability to deliver local solutions".
- Just Forests fully supports the following submission by the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA).

¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/ge/DE_Watch.pdf Accessed 29/01/14

² <http://www.justforests.org/news/groups-call-on-flatley-to>

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Issues for consultation:

IDEA welcomes the commitments, in the Public Consultation Document under “the core elements of Irish foreign policy”, to the promotion of human rights, disarmament and arms control, the fight against hunger and poverty and support for international development, and global conflict resolution efforts. We welcome the statement that the international community has a responsibility to respond effectively to global challenges such as hunger and climate change. We believe that universalism in international policy commitments and targets such as post-2015 development goals is essential to effectively respond to and tackle these issues. These global challenges can only be addressed through global action that involves states and citizens in all parts of the world. The international community has not only a responsibility but also a requirement to act in concert to address these global challenges.

Of the trends and environmental changes listed in the document, we would like to particularly focus on “the emergence of individuals and networks of citizens as global actors” driving global change. Citizens’ participation in and engagement with the decisions that affect them is essential to address today’s challenges at local, national and global levels. Networks of citizens can affect change, and build the awareness and understanding that enables social change and tackling global challenges. Supporting citizens’ and civil society participation in political process and decision making should therefore be a cornerstone of Ireland’s foreign policy. In particular:

Supporting and defending civil society space, and supporting emerging participative civil society spaces should be a priority for Ireland’s foreign policy.

Support, through UN mechanisms, for participative and transformative education through Global Education First: The UN Secretary-General’s Global Initiative on Education which states “Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.”²

Ireland should aim to be champion of citizens’ movements and public participation globally. This will enhance Ireland’s standing internationally as a voice for human rights and global justice, and as a global leader with strong clearly articulated commitments to global justice, human rights and civil society.

The Public Consultation Document identifies several key issues for the consultation. We will focus on the following areas:

Promoting Values and Interests

Ireland’s foreign policy must be based on clear central values of equality, human rights and global justice. Clear commitments to these values as a central element of Irish

² <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/220.htm> Accessed 29/01/14

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foreign policy must be articulated and backed-up with relevant instruments and practice.

As a small state with limited resources and influence, Ireland can play a global role by taking leadership in our commitment to these values and the enforcement of these values. In doing so, Ireland can build on the strong reputation gained by Ireland's foreign service, foreign policy and NGO sector in the areas of international development, human rights and global justice. If a clear commitment is made to be an international voice for values based foreign policy, Ireland can build on the momentum and strong foreign policy voice established through our role in international processes such as the post-2015 process. Specific named commitments should be made on Ireland's support for:

- Tackling inequality and ending hunger and poverty.
- Universalist approaches to global challenges including climate change and the post-2015 development goals.
- Ensuring public participation in political processes and decision making, and supporting democratization.
- Supporting and defending civil society space.
- Promoting human rights and protecting human rights defenders.

Development education and civil society, both domestically and internationally, have a crucial role to play in ensuring public understanding of these values and engagement with the delivery of Ireland's values based foreign policy.

International Development

One World, One Future, Ireland's policy on international development.

IDEA welcomes Ireland's policy on international development, *One World, One Future* and in particular the whole of government approach. We welcome the commitments within the policy to Development Education and to accountability at home and abroad.

IDEA argues that a commitment to accountability requires support for development education. Accountability requires public education. Public understanding of global justice issues is necessary to ensure public accountability for Ireland's international development policy. There is a fundamental link between any government policy that emphasizes accountability and the corresponding need for education. Accountability requires education in order to become a reality. Any policy committing to accountability must have a corresponding commitment to education. Development Education is therefore a crucial element of Ireland's foreign policy and international development policy.

One World, One Future stresses the importance of maintaining public support for Ireland's international development programme. Public understanding is essential for engagement with this programme. Critical engagement with global justice issues is a

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prerequisite for long term public engagement and support of Ireland's international development and human rights policies. Development Education is therefore essential for public engagement and accountability for Ireland's foreign policy. These policies require investment in development education in Ireland.

Ireland is considered a development education leader in Europe and internationally. Irish Aid has supported and developed strong partnerships with the development education sector. It is essential to build on these successes as the level of public understanding needs to be increased to achieve accountability and ongoing engagement.

IDEA supports the focus on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). This is a crucial mechanism for the delivery of *One World, One Future* as a whole of government approach. IDEA urges the engagement of the Department of Education and Skills in the delivery of Ireland's policy on international development and Ireland's foreign policy.

The Department of Education and Skills National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in conjunction with *One World, One Future*, creates a strong policy mechanism for a cross-departmental or whole of government approach.

Complimentarity with key related policy instruments should be considered with the Irish Aid Development Education Unit as a key actor. International initiatives such as Global Education First: The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education and the UN Post-2015 framework should inform Ireland's foreign policy, in particular the emphases on a rights-based approach to development, on participation and on global justice, ensuring policy coherence for international development and for sustainable development.

Framework for global development post-2015.

As stated above, a clear commitment to values based foreign policy will enable Ireland to build on our leading role in the post-2015 process and negotiations. Drawing on the central values of equality, human rights and global justice, IDEA identifies two specific focuses for Ireland's foreign policy engagement with the post-2015 process.

Universalism is an essential principal for the post-2015 framework which Ireland must defend and take a lead on. Universal international policy commitments and targets are essential to effectively respond to and tackle the global challenges of inequality and climate change. These global challenges require global action from the international community. The commitments in the post-2015 process to date to universalism must be defended and enshrined in the post-2015 new integrated framework for international development. Universalism and the local-global nature of global challenges is central to the ethos of development education and the active citizenship that is enabled by development education.

Participation of citizens in decision making must remain a central focus for the post - 2015 UN development goals. Citizens' participation in and engagement with the

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decisions that affect them is essential to address today's challenges at local, national and global levels. Support to date in the post-2015 process for participation and a human rights based approach must be included in the post-2015 new integrated framework for international development.

Ireland's foreign policy should include mechanisms to amplify and communicate to the UN and inter-governmental bodies the innovation and best practice within Irish Civil Society on these core approaches of the Post-2015 framework, approaches which are exemplified in the Irish development education, international development and human rights sectors.

United Nations and multi-lateral initiatives.

Ireland's foreign policy should prioritise support for Global Education First: The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education in particular Priority 3 focusing on global citizenship education. "The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it. Education must also be relevant in answering the big questions of the day. Technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century."³ The impact of this initiative across government departments should be incorporated into Ireland's foreign policy and Ireland's whole of government approach to international development.

³ <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/220.htm> Accessed 29/01/14