

Civil society calls on Taoiseach to take charge of delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Today's fifth anniversary of historic UN Summit must see Ireland recommit to action

On the 5th anniversary of the historic UN Summit that adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, Irish civil society organisations have called on Taoiseach Micheál Martin to take charge of Ireland's plan to achieve the Goals. As the UN marks the anniversary in New York, Coalition 2030 [1] has emphasised that the Taoiseach must ensure that delivery of the Goals is central to all areas of Government policy-making. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals constitute the key roadmap for all states to follow in order to overcome poverty and hunger and achieve a healthier and more equitable world by 2030.

Now the UN is calling for a Decade of Action to deliver the Goals by 2030 and reach those people furthest behind. Coalition 2030 strongly supports the initiative - our commitment to the SDGs can no longer be treated as a feel-good soundbite or a niche policy concern. As President Higgins rightly emphasised on Monday in Ireland's [National Statement](#) delivered for the special session of the General Assembly to mark the UN's 75th anniversary, *'achieving the success of the Sustainable Development Goals is not an option for us anymore, it is the condition for our common survival'*.

Notwithstanding Ireland's leadership role in co-chairing the international negotiations that agreed the SDGs in 2015, action to meet the Goals at home has not advanced anywhere near the scale or speed required. The UN Decade of Action calls for an immediate step-change in approach. Although Ireland produced a national SDG implementation document in 2018, there remains fundamental concerns about the state's commitment to progressively aligning Government policy with the SDGs and their 169 sub-targets.

As achieving the SDG requires a whole of Government approach, Coalition 2030 has been advocating that responsibility for delivery should lie with the Department of the Taoiseach. Although the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment was tasked with leading on SDG-related issues, due to internal changes it is now unclear who will lead the cross-government work required to develop the new implementation plan the Government has promised. It is a time for the Taoiseach and his Department to take the lead.

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented loss of lives and livelihoods and deepening existing inequalities across the world. The result is that progress towards the SDGs has been fundamentally undermined, with the poorest most affected. However, a renewed focus on the SDGs can provide for a just and transformative recovery from COVID-19, one that not only responds to the current pandemic but also increases resilience for the most vulnerable communities and workers across our society.

Oisín Coghlan, Director of Friends of the Earth and a member of the Coalition 2030 Steering Committee said – *"Coalition 2030 is concerned that the Government is side-lining the Sustainable Development Goals just when the Covid pandemic makes the need for a comprehensive response to the challenges the Goals identify all the more pressing. Since 2015, Ireland has produced little by way of substantive steps to embed the 2030 Agenda across Government policies, budgets, and regulatory frameworks. The Taoiseach and his Department must now take responsibility for developing the new implementation plan the Government has promised."*

Jerry Mac Evilly, Coordinator of Coalition 2030, stated – *"The Government showed in its immediate response to the Covid crisis that, through leadership and clear communication, together with proper governance and accountability, a comprehensive strategy to safeguarding citizens and communities could be rapidly developed and implemented. The Sustainable Development Goals constitute precisely the type of cross-cutting roadmap that*

can provide for a just recovery to the pandemic and ensure the most vulnerable are protected.”

Niamh Garvey, Head of Policy and Advocacy for Trócaire and a member of the Coalition 2030 Steering Committee stated *“Ireland has recently secured a seat on the UN Security Council based upon a platform of empathy and partnership. Partnership is at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Ireland’s commitment to providing 0.7% of GNI in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to support the delivery of the SDGs internationally. Ireland must continue to demonstrate leadership by maintaining the ODA budget and increasing progress across all our SDGs commitments”*

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Notes

[1] Coalition 2030 is an alliance of 75 civil society organisations working together to ensure Ireland keeps its promise to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both at home and abroad. For further information see www.ireland2030.org/about-us