



Coalition 2030 Calls on Government to Put Sustainable Development Goals Back at the Centre of National Policy Ahead of the Upcoming United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York.

Ahead of this year's UN High Level Political Forum, Coalition 2030 is calling on the Government to recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as Ireland's overarching framework for sustainable, inclusive development. As Ireland enters the final years of the 2030 Agenda, Coalition 2030 believes responsibility for coordinating SDG implementation should be moved to the Department of the Taoiseach to reinforce the Programme for Government commitment to a whole-of-government approach and ensure the Goals are recognised as a national framework for social, economic and environmental policy, rather than being viewed primarily through a climate lens. Progress on every SDG must be judged through the commitment to Leave No One Behind, ensuring that climate action, infrastructure, housing, innovation and international partnerships advance human rights, equality and meaningful participation.

Here are some of the points we will be making in New York:

SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation

The recent Sustainable Development Progress Report 2026^[1] from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network states that Significant Challenges Remain for Ireland to meet this Goal.

The recent Sustainable Progress Index^[2], produced by Social Justice Ireland shows there has been a move away from the desired direction of SDG 6 at EU level: “While the sanitation situation evolved favourably, the picture is mixed regarding water quality and unfavourable when it comes to water scarcity” (Eurostat, 2025, p.12). Results for Ireland are mixed, based on 4 indicators. Relative to other countries, we score well on Eurostat’s water exploitation index (a measure of total fresh water use as a percentage of the renewable freshwater resources – groundwater and surface water). Ireland is ranked in third place on this indicator. Less favourable is our performance on the proportion of wastewater that is treated - Ireland is in last place. Also, indicators for access to improved drinking water and sanitation show further development is required. Ireland’s overall rank on this SDG is 13.

While the vast majority of the population are using a safely managed water service, too many areas still have boil water notices showing our infrastructure is lacking. We join with the ITUC in calling for social protection coverage to those exposed to water insecurity and to establish social dialogue mechanisms on water and sanitation management.

Water and sanitation do not affect all communities equally. 70% of Ireland’s estuaries are in poor status with agriculture posing the biggest pressure. A rights-based approach requires particular attention to those most at risk of exclusion, including persons with disabilities,

older people, rural communities, migrants and refugees, Traveller communities and low-income households. The Arterial Drainage Act of 1945 needs reform and is causing issues regarding water and land management. We need to look at addressing flooding from a Nature based approach. Policy coherence across Departments will help overcome these challenges.

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy

The Sustainable Development Progress Report 2026[1] states that Significant Challenges remain for Ireland to meet this goal.

The recent Sustainable Progress Index[2], produced by Social Justice Ireland shows Ireland is performing poorly on this goal with a rank of 11th place out of EU 14. The share of renewable energy in Ireland is one of the lowest relative to our EU peers and is well below the EU average (ranked 12). Ireland also does poorly on the measure of CO2 emissions from energy fuels combustion/electricity output (MtCO2/TW). The indicator, the proportion of people who are unable to keep their home adequately warm – shows Ireland ranked 8th. Overall, the combined indicators give Ireland a score with a rank of 11th place.

While our overall production of renewable energy is increasing, we need to increase the share in total final energy consumption. Focus needs to shift away from Fossil Fuels and LNG to a cleaner fuel model. We need to end wasteful government subsidies to fossil fuel companies. The Just Transition commission[5] and NESC report, “Accelerating the Transition to a Sustainable Energy System”[3] shows a matrix is now in place with a bottom up approach and initiatives can act as a springboard to achieving Net Zero. Net Zero is a huge opportunity, as we have an opportunity in this country to achieve net zero; with less industrial development, we can deliver clean and affordable energy without dismantling too much of the infrastructure that is currently in place, however any progress on Industry, innovation and infrastructure leads to decent work and employment opportunities for all. The transition to a low-carbon economy must be a Just Transition. Climate action is inseparable from social justice and should ensure that the costs and benefits of transition are shared fairly. Policies must be developed with the participation of communities most affected, including those experiencing poverty or energy poverty and insecurity. Coalition 2030 calls to ensure gender-responsive Just Transition measures in the energy sector.

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The Sustainable Development Progress Report 2026[1] marks this as being achieved for Ireland. This shows we can make progress on goals and work must continue to achieve them all.

We must promote circularity and traceability, ensuring that multinational enterprises are held accountable for labour rights ILO, fiscal and environmental standards across their supply chains.

Future infrastructure and innovation in investments should embed Universal Design principles from the outset/ as a forethought, ensuring accessibility and inclusion are built into infrastructure, digital systems and public services rather than added retrospectively/ as an afterthought. Linking industrial policies with social dialogue and decent jobs creation is key.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

Sustainable Cities and Communities are Fundamental needs in Life. The Sustainable Development Progress Report 2026[1] states that challenges remain for Ireland to achieve this goal.

The trend in homelessness in Ireland over the past decade is deeply concerning. The monthly data from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage reveals a troubling ongoing upward trend of individual and family homelessness in Ireland over many years. This is clearly a challenge to achieving inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities as envisioned by SDG 11.

There is a huge focus on the need to build houses BUT this must be approached in two parts. While we do need to scale investment in housing, that investment should be focussed on delivering social and affordable housing. At the same time, we must build communities by investing in accessible public transport, community infrastructure and green spaces, while also allowing space for nature to thrive. We need to prioritise creating communities and investment in Community Spaces if we are to do things right. Sustainable cities and communities must be inclusive, accessible and designed for everyone along with the provision of quality public services, healthcare and education.

Climate justice, social justice, universal design and accessibility should be central considerations if Ireland is to deliver communities where no one is left behind. Ireland as a society is financially doing 'well' but people's experience of well-being is not progressing in line with our economic growth. Ireland needs to prioritise the wellbeing of society over economic growth. Measures of success should go beyond economic indicators to include wellbeing, social cohesion and equal participation in community life.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals

Disappointingly the Sustainable Development Progress Report 2026[1] states that major Challenges Remain for Ireland to achieve this goal.

Coalition 2030 is calling for SDG leadership to be centralised in the Department of the Taoiseach to deliver the whole-of-government strategy outlined in the Programme for Government.

While Ireland is a strong advocate for Development Co-operation in a world where Overseas Aid budgets are shrinking we would like to see Ireland continue to be strong advocates for the agreed 0.7% of Gross National Income and lead the way in overcoming the challenge to get to this figure. We are waiting for the successor to Ireland's Second National Implementation Plan which covers the period 2022-2024. The next implementation framework should adopt an intersectional approach that recognises how disability, gender, poverty, age, ethnicity and other forms of inequality interact and compound exclusion. Progress towards the SDGs should be measured by how effectively those furthest behind are reached. Space for Civil Society is reducing worldwide which is an alarming trend. Civil society organisations and grassroots community groups play a vital role in achieving the SDGs and should be recognised as equal partners in policy development, implementation and monitoring.

Ireland has an opportunity to show leadership by embedding social inclusion (youth, gender, older, disabled, marginalised...) across SDG implementation. Inclusion requires more than representation targets; it requires meaningful engagement, leadership opportunities and decision-making power for marginalised and underserved groups at all stages of development processes. This reflects both the Leave No One Behind commitment of Agenda 2030 and Ireland's obligations under various international treaties it has ratified.

ENDS

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[1] <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/ireland/>

[2] <https://www.socialjustice.ie/publication/sustainable-progress-index-2025>

[3] <https://justtransitioncommission.ie/reports-publications/>

[4] <https://www.nesc.ie/news-events/press-releases/council-report-no-172-accelerating-the-transition-to-a-sustainable-energy-system/>