

Check against delivery

Rio + 20, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 2012

Statement by Mr. Phil Hogan, T.D.,

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local
Government, Ireland**

Thank you Mr President.

I want to congratulate you and the Government of Brazil on the excellent organisation of this conference.

At the outset, I wish to support the statement made by President Barroso on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The outcome of Rio +20 opens a new chapter in the global effort to advance sustainable development. In a negotiation process with such a diversity of actors and interests, a sense of disappointment at some aspects of the outcome is perhaps inevitable. Having said that, we are pleased that we have an agreement, one that will be pivotal in influencing future policy and action to enhance our environment and improve the well-being of our peoples.

On coming into office just over a year ago, our Government set about developing a new overarching framework for the advancement of sustainable development in Ireland. With the process leading up to this conference providing the ideal backdrop,

we worked intensively across Government and with key stakeholders, including civil society.

This has culminated in the publication earlier this month of *Our Sustainable Future, a Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland*, which is designed to firmly embed sustainable development principles in policy formulation and decision making across all sectors. It sets out a pragmatic set of measures designed to place Ireland on a clear trajectory to a low carbon, climate resilient and resource efficient future.

The new Framework is very much aimed at facilitating the development of the green economy in Ireland, which is central to achieving long-term sustainable development, with enduring economic growth that provides decent jobs and reduces poverty. We therefore very much welcome the positive language on the role of the green economy in the outcome document from this conference.

We are also acutely aware of the pivotal role of sustainable development in the fight against poverty and hunger. The European Union has a proud record in supporting the drive to eradicate poverty and is by far the largest contributor of Overseas Development Aid.

I am particularly proud of my own country's track record on ODA. Even at a time of very significant economic challenge, we are still the seventh largest ODA contributor in the world on a per capita basis; and we have committed ourselves to the UN 0.7% of GNP target for ODA. Given that the central priority of our aid

programme is to end extreme poverty, hunger and undernutrition, we very much welcome the fact that the outcome document gives a strong commitment to ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for present and future generations.

Another key element of the outcome document is the commitment to commence a process to develop Sustainable Development Goals. While we might have wished for greater ambition in this area, what has been achieved does provide clear guidance for the SDG process, which we now need to advance urgently in a coherent and efficient manner. The process needs to be fully aligned with the crucial effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, an area in which Ireland is heavily involved, working closely with other donors and developing country partners.

While the outcome reached in relation to institutional reform might also be less than what we might have hoped for, we recognise that we have nevertheless secured a basis for building a stronger UNEP. We also look forward to the High Level Forum's work to promote sustainable development governance, as we enter the essential implementation phase.

On the subject of implementation, I would like to take the opportunity today to make specific reference to the Aarhus Convention, the origins of which can, of course, be traced back to the 1992 Rio Declaration. The new Irish Government appointed last year assigned a high priority to early ratification of this Convention, recognising its role in laying down a set of basic rules to promote citizen's involvement in environmental matters and

improve enforcement of environmental law. I am in the happy position to be able to say that the long journey towards ratification has now been completed and Ireland formally ratified the Convention yesterday.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, let me re-iterate that while the outcome from this conference does not deliver fully on all our ambitions, it nevertheless provides a strong basis for moving forward quickly and substantively on many key issues. I want to assure you that Ireland will work tirelessly to support the global implementation effort that must now commence to ensure that all of the hard work leading up to today will not have been in vain.

Thank you.