



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AN ROINN GNÓTHAI EACHTRACHA

Department of Foreign Affairs

Statement of Strategy

2008 - 2010



Mission Statement

The Mission of the Department of Foreign Affairs is

- to advance Ireland's values and interests within Europe and in a changing world;
- to promote peace, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development internationally;
- to protect our citizens abroad; and
- to support lasting reconciliation on this island.



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Foreword by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D.

This Statement of Strategy sets out the high Level Goals for the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as the strategies we will employ to make progress towards those goals.

The text is, I think, both clear and readable. By setting out clearly what we will do, we are well placed to work with and on behalf of Irish citizens. Such accessibility to citizens is essential to the proper functioning of any Government Department.

The environment in which the Department works is constantly changing. We are influenced by external factors perhaps more than any other Department and we must adapt to that changing environment, in order that we continue to serve the interests of Irish citizens and Irish business.

In such a fast changing environment, we must stay true to the core fundamentals of our foreign policy: the promotion and protection of human rights, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of the rule of law. As a small country, we can make the biggest impact in these areas by working through the United Nations and the European Union.

We want to see a strong United Nations, supported by its members in fulfilling the tasks it has been set by those same members. While we have seen some progress in UN reform in recent years, it is still a work in progress. Ireland will continue to play a lead role in the reform process.

Ireland's position within the European Union is changing, both as a result of our own success and because of the changed dynamics of the enlarged Union. An effective and well-functioning Union remains critical to achieving our goals both at home and on the international stage. My Ministerial colleagues and I argued strongly for a Yes vote in the Lisbon Treaty referendum. We must now, of course, respect the outcome. We must also work for a way forward that keeps Ireland at the heart of Europe and thus protects our essential interests. The Department of Foreign Affairs will have a critical role to play in this regard.

In a globalised international environment, the Department of Foreign Affairs has an essential role to play in raising awareness of Ireland as a location for inward investment and seeking out markets for Irish goods and services. We will be vigorous in our pursuit of these interests, including through our network of diplomatic missions and through organising high-level inward and outward visits.

Consolidating peace on our island and continuing to strengthen relationships between North and South, and as well as between communities, remains a core objective for the Department. With the enormous progress of recent year, there are new opportunities for cooperation which will benefit both parts of this island. However, significant challenges remain, such as continuing sectarianism and the legacy of the past. The Good Friday Agreement will guide our work in all of these areas.

We have begun to develop a distinctive Irish contribution to conflict resolution, in part drawing on our own experiences on this island. I know that to achieve lasting results



will require time and the investment of resources. We will build up our capabilities in this area, making use of the full range of instruments available to us, including diplomatic and aid instruments.

Earlier this year, in Dublin, agreement was reached on the first ever international instrument to ban cluster munitions. The challenge now is to build on this landmark achievement, by ensuring the early ratification and implementation of the Convention.

The Irish Aid programme is an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy. In September 2006, we published a White Paper on Irish Aid, which sets out our priorities and provides a yardstick against which our efforts can be measured.

We will ensure that the Irish Aid programme maintains its reputation as one of the best official aid programmes in the world. In addition, in response to concerns we heard during the public consultation on the White Paper, we will redouble our efforts to inform the Irish public of the good work that is being done in their name, and with their money.

Support for, and the protection of, Irish citizens abroad remains a particular priority for me. In July 2006, the Department organised the evacuation of Irish citizens from a crisis situation in Lebanon. We have now put in place the systems and structures to guarantee a similarly effective response to other consular crises in the future. On a day-to-day basis we will constantly review and update our processes so that we can continue to provide a first-class service to the travelling public.

In a constantly changing international environment, we, as a Department and as a State, must remain flexible and agile, in order to respond to new challenges and grasp new opportunities. It is important that we challenge ourselves in this way so that we can continue to provide the best possible service to the Irish taxpayer.

Mar Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha, tá fúm an dul chun cinn atá déanta againn a neartú i ngach dóigh, chomh fada agus is féidir. Cheana féin, d'éirigh linn aontú a bhaint amach faoin gcéad ionstraim idirnáisiúnta chun lón cogaidh chnuasbhumaí, nó cluster bombs i mBéarla, a chosc ag cruinniú i bPáirc an Chrócaigh a bhailigh breis is céad tír le chéile. Ba mhaith liom an dul chun cinn céanna a fheiceáil i ngnéithe eile de bheartas eachtrach an phobail, agus déanfaidh mé mo dhícheall pearsanta, le cuidiú ó Dick Roche, Peter Power agus ón Roinn anseo, é seo a chur i gcrích.

Mar a dúirt mé i nGaeilge thuas, I look forward together with my Ministerial colleagues Dick Roche T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, and Peter Power T.D., Minister of State for Development Cooperation, to working with the staff of the Department to deliver the challenging, but realistic, agenda of work we have set out in this document.

Micheál Martin T.D.
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Introduction by the Secretary General

Our Statement of Strategy is a guide to our work programme for the next three years for citizens and for external observers. It is also a guide for those of us working in the Department; in it we set clear targets for our work and outline the paths we will take to achieve those targets.

In some respects, three years is a very short time in the life of a Government Department. However, with ambition and effort, much can be achieved. Significant achievements for the Department over the last three years include:

- Advancing political progress in Northern Ireland, which paved the way for the restoration of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement.
- Publishing a White Paper on Irish Aid.
- The development of one of the most advanced passports in the world, as part of our ongoing efforts to improve services to Irish citizens travelling abroad.
- The establishment of a Conflict Resolution Unit in the Department.

In addition to delivering on these planned activities, we have also had to react to the unexpected.

For example, our response to the Asian Tsunami, both in terms of support to Irish citizens and our aid to those in need, was swift and effective. It also precipitated the development of an enhanced capability to respond to major humanitarian emergencies.

In dealing with both the expected and the unexpected, our achievements have paved the way for us to tackle new challenges and make further progress in the future. This Statement of Strategy sets out our plans in this regard.

It is important to stress that we do not work in isolation. We work with other Government Departments, State Agencies and non-governmental organisations. Our network of missions abroad is a resource for the Government as a whole, as well as for Irish citizens

The Statement of Strategy sets out a challenging programme of work for the coming years. We will ensure that the people and systems are in place to deliver on that programme, ensuring the effective and efficient use of the resources available to us. The Department's most valuable resource is its people and we will support the members of our team in developing their skills for the benefit of our customers, the people of Ireland.

The preparation of the Statement of Strategy was a collaborative exercise, bringing together people from all parts of the Department and I want to thank them for their hard work.



I look forward to working with all of my colleagues, and with our partners both inside and outside the Government system, in advancing the six high-level goals we have set for the years ahead.

Dermot Gallagher
Secretary General



HIGH LEVEL GOALS 2008 - 2010

In the context of implementing the commitments outlined in the Agreed Programme for Government (June 2007), the Department's High Level Goals for the period 2008-2010 are to:

Contribute to international peace and security, promote conflict resolution, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and support effective common strategies to address global challenges.	Promote the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement by supporting the effective operation of its institutions, strengthening North/South cooperation and working for lasting reconciliation.
Deliver on the commitments in the White Paper on Irish Aid through reducing poverty, supporting sustainable development and promoting development cooperation as an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy.	Promote Ireland and its bilateral relations with other countries; advance our economic interests and enhance our cultural profile overseas
Secure Ireland's interests in the EU and contribute fully to the Union's future development.	Provide a high quality passport and consular service to all Irish citizens and actively engage with our Diaspora.

Part 1

Introduction

Structure of Statement

This Statement of Strategy sets out the Department of Foreign Affairs' strategic priorities over the next three years, building on the commitments contained in the Agreed Programme for Government.

- Part 1 describes our role and how the Department is organised and structured.
- Part 2 presents our six High Level Goals (HLGs) for the period 2008-2010, taking close account of the Agreed Programme for Government. Each HLG is reviewed in terms of the environment within which we operate and the known challenges and opportunities facing the Department over the period ahead. Under each HLG, specific objectives and the supporting strategies are defined, as well as specific performance indicators to facilitate reviews of progress achieved.
- Part 3 of this Statement describes how the Department will manage its resources and develop its capabilities over this period to support the implementation and delivery of our stated objectives.

The Role of the Department

The Department advises the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of State for European Affairs, the Minister of State for Development Cooperation, and the Government on all aspects of foreign policy. It formulates and coordinates Ireland's EU policies and its response to international developments; provides advice and support on all issues relating to Northern Ireland, to cooperation between North and South on the island, and to enhancing Ireland's relationship with Britain; and administers the Government's programme of development assistance. The Department also has responsibility for providing passport services and consular assistance to Irish citizens abroad.

Organisation of the Department

Under the political direction of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Department is managed by the Secretary General, who is also the Accounting Officer for its two Votes - Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs) and Vote 29 (Development Cooperation). The Secretary General is supported by a Management Advisory Committee (MAC) comprising the Heads of the main Divisions in the Department.

The Department currently comprises ten Divisions at headquarters (HQ) and a total of 75 diplomatic and consular offices abroad (referred to as "Missions"), as well as the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat in Belfast and the North-South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat in Armagh.

The Department has its Headquarters in Iveagh House, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. The Development Cooperation Directorate is, however, in the process of decentralising to Limerick, while certain other Divisions of the Department are based in other locations in central Dublin. Our Passport Offices are located in Dublin, Balbriggan and Cork.

The Department currently has a staffing complement of approximately 1,260 staff, of which approximately 900 are based in Ireland and approximately 360 are based at our Missions abroad at any one time. We also employ approximately 300 members of locally recruited staff at our Missions abroad.

The Department Abroad

Ireland's diplomatic missions and consular offices are dedicated to the pursuit of Ireland's interests abroad and to enhancing its international profile. They are the external offices of the State, promoting Government policies and participating in the work of international organisations.

Diplomatic relations are maintained with a total of 167 countries, through either resident or non-resident Ambassadors. We currently have a network of 75 resident diplomatic and consular missions abroad comprising:

- 57 Embassies
- Six multilateral Missions (to the EU, the UN in New York and Geneva, the OSCE, the OECD and UNESCO, the Council of Europe)
- Eight Consulates General and four other offices.

In addition, we have an extensive network of Honorary Consuls General (21) and Honorary Consuls (67) who provide assistance to Irish citizens in 59 countries, together with an Honorary Consular Agent in Bahrain.

The Department's network of diplomatic and consular missions is uniquely placed to perform a diverse range of representational, promotional and reporting functions. They:

- Present and advance Ireland's interests in multilateral fora and organisations, including the EU and UN;
- deepen Ireland's relations with host governments and advance our international priorities and objectives;
- report on political, economic, legal, commercial and, as appropriate, EU developments;
- advance Ireland's economic interests through working with others in the public and private sectors to expand trade and tourism, and to highlight the benefits of inward investment in Ireland;
- oversee the implementation of programmes in developing countries funded by the Government's overseas development programme Irish Aid;
- provide assistance to Irish citizens abroad and strengthen contact with local Irish communities; and
- promote Irish culture and disseminate information on Ireland.

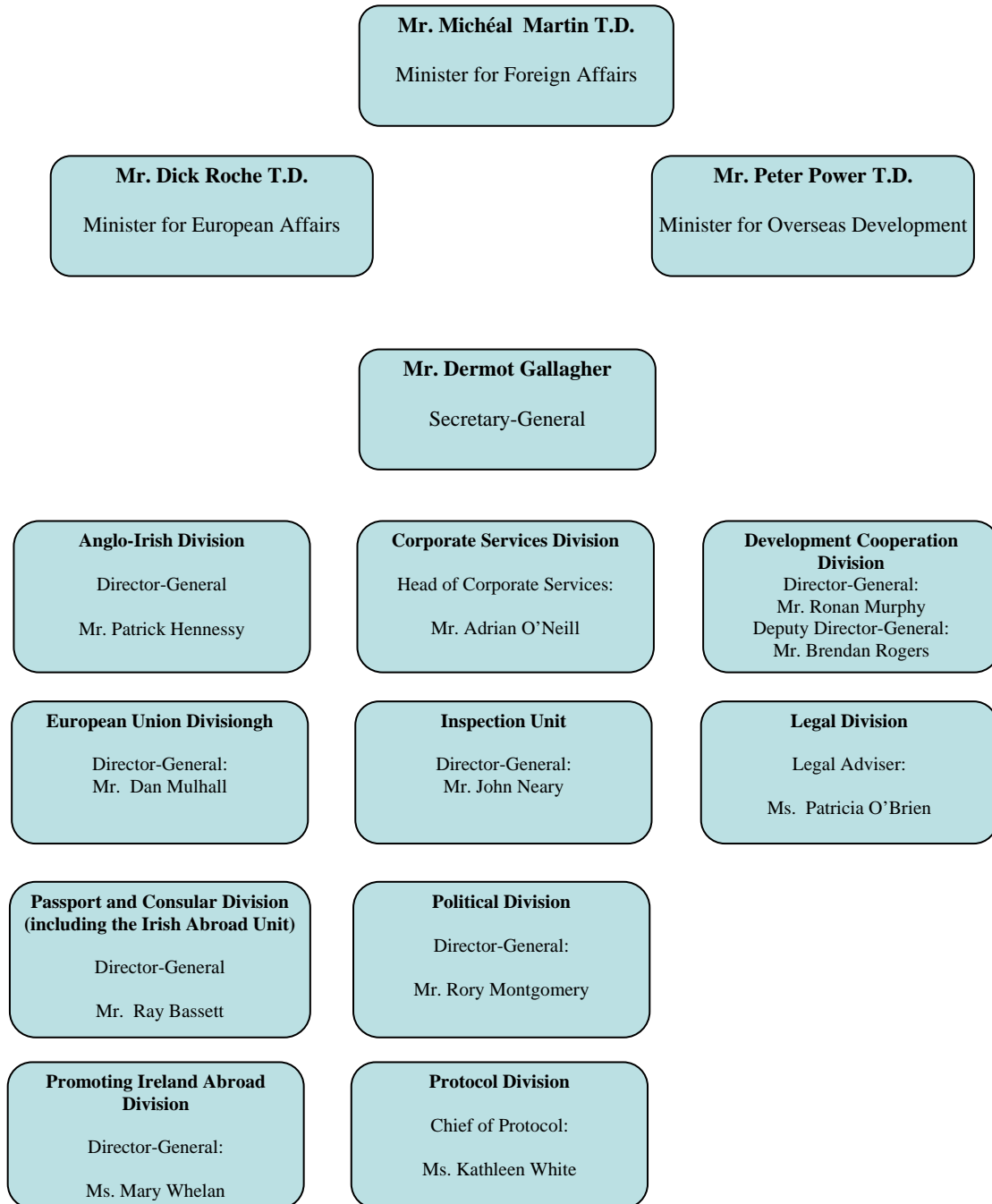
www.DFA.ie and www.irishaid.gov.ie

Further information about the structure and work of the Department, including contact details for Irish Embassies and Consulates, can be found on our website: www.dfa.ie. The website provides detailed and up-to-date information on the full range of services provided by the Department.

Detailed information about the Irish Aid programme, which is managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, is available on www.irishaid.gov.ie.



Organisation Chart





Part II

Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

2008 - 2010

High Level Goal, 2008-2010:

To contribute to international peace and security, promote conflict resolution, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and support effective common strategies to address global challenges.

Context and Environment

Irish foreign policy is based on the core principles of promoting human rights, the rule of law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and disarmament and non-proliferation. These mutually reinforcing pillars will continue to guide our work and our relations with key partners over the years ahead. However, we are also subject to influence from external factors. We must continue to evaluate and develop our foreign policy, so that we can respond effectively to this constantly changing environment.

Ireland's tradition of neutrality is itself a resource. It gives us a standing and a credibility in our dealings with partners and international organisations. We will make that credibility count.

Over the three years covered by this Statement of Strategy, Ireland, together with our EU partners and the wider international community, will be presented with increasingly complex global challenges. Unfortunately, some of these challenges, such as the ongoing humanitarian and political crisis in Darfur and the situation in the Middle East, are all too well known and will remain prominent on both the EU and international agenda.

However, as an integral part of a coherent and comprehensive foreign policy, we must also develop an effective response to new 21st century challenges which threaten international peace and security, including international terrorism, energy security, migration, global public health and pandemics such as HIV/AIDS or avian influenza. We will do so through our membership of the EU and by working to enhance the effectiveness of our contribution to international and regional organisations of which we are members.

Active involvement in the UN remains a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy. The central role of the UN system in safeguarding international peace and security, and leading the effort to overcome poverty and under-development, remains clear. The UN also has a leading role to play in developing an effective international approach to global challenges such as combating climate change. However, important institutional and organisational issues, including the reform of the Security Council, remain unresolved and the effectiveness of the recently established Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission remain to be demonstrated. Strengthening the UN to ensure that it has the capacity to fulfil its responsibilities and to act effectively will continue to be a leading Irish priority for the period ahead.

The promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation will remain a core activity for the UN and a priority for Ireland. One of the main challenges in the period ahead will be to achieve progress in the lead up to the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010.

Ireland's foreign policy objectives are also advanced through our active participation in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). We will continue to promote EU engagement in efforts by the international community to secure lasting and peaceful resolutions to the ongoing crises in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. In this context, we expect the period ahead to see strengthened cooperation between the EU, the UN and regional organisations, such as the African Union, who have an increasingly important political and peace-keeping role to play throughout the world.

2008-2010: Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Work to make the United Nations and other multilateral institutions more effective in facing global, regional and development challenges.</p>	<p>Uphold the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.</p> <p>Co-ordinate closely with other Government Departments, and relevant actors to ensure an active, positive and coherent Irish contribution to the work of the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.</p> <p>Support effective implementation of recent reforms of the UN system, and envisaged further reforms.</p> <p>Support the work of regional organisations, such as the African Union.</p> <p>Support efforts to ensure improved coherence and effectiveness in UN development activity, in particular at country level.</p>
<p>Contribute to effective action through the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in promoting international peace and security.</p>	<p>Ensure that the EU remains actively engaged in furthering the search for lasting peace and stability in areas of conflict and instability including Burma, Iran, the Middle East, Sudan/Darfur, Western Balkans, and Zimbabwe.</p>
<p>Develop a distinctive Irish contribution to international conflict resolution and peace-building.</p>	<p>Increase Ireland's profile through enhanced support for international efforts to promote conflict resolution, including initiatives of the UN, EU and African Union (AU).</p> <p>Strengthen Irish resources for engagement in conflict resolution.</p> <p>In co-ordination with the Department of Defence, seek to ensure that Ireland continues to make a significant contribution to international peace and security through UN-mandated peace support operations.</p>
<p>Promote respect for and protection of human rights and the rule of law.</p>	<p>Participate actively in the work of the UN Human Rights Council, the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Assembly of States parties to the International Criminal Court. Continue to support the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and international criminal justice initiatives.</p> <p>Contribute to the activities of the Council of Europe and OSCE, with particular reference to setting and monitoring human rights standards in Europe and supporting the consolidation of democracy in the OSCE area.</p> <p>Represent Ireland effectively before the European Court of Human Rights in legal proceedings and before the Treaty Monitoring Bodies under the UN Human Rights Conventions in individual complaints mechanisms.</p> <p>Strengthen the relationship between the Department and civil society organisations working in this area, in particular through the Joint Standing Committee on Human Rights.</p>



	<p>In our development cooperation programme, we will provide support to strengthen democracy, human rights and good governance, working with both governments and civil society, in developing countries.</p>
<p>Promote disarmament and non-proliferation.</p>	<p>Work to achieve a positive outcome to the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to promote the New Agenda for a nuclear-weapons-free world.</p> <p>Work for universalisation and implementation of international conventions on chemical and biological weapons.</p> <p>Work for early entry into force and universalisation of Convention on Cluster Munitions agreed in Dublin in May 2008.</p>



Key Performance Indicators

- Extent to which Ireland's foreign policy is reflected in the outcomes of our participation in international and regional fora.
- Active EU engagement with the wider international community in efforts to secure lasting peace and stability in areas of conflict and crisis.
- Enhanced support and Irish resources for international conflict resolution efforts.
- Irish contribution to UN-mandated peace support operations.
- Enhanced liaison and co-ordination arrangements with our Missions abroad, other Departments, State Agencies and other relevant bodies, to ensure Ireland's interests are well represented in international bodies.
- Timely and accurate reports to Treaty Monitoring Bodies under the Human Rights Conventions.
- Effective representation of Ireland's position before the European Court of Human Rights and Treaty Monitoring Bodies.
- Strengthened relationship with civil society through the Joint Standing Committee on Human Rights and other outreach initiatives.
- Ratification and implementation of Cluster Munitions Convention agreed in Dublin in May 2008.

High Level Goal, 2008-2010:

To deliver on the commitments in the White Paper on Irish Aid through reducing poverty, supporting sustainable development and promoting development cooperation as an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy.

Context and Environment

The Irish Aid programme is clearly focused on poverty reduction, with the aim of reducing vulnerability and increasing opportunity for the world's poorest people. The size and scale of the programme is currently expanding at a rapid rate, in line with the Government's commitment to reaching the United Nations target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2012, and will reach 0.54% in 2008.

The growth of the programme is taking place against a background of consensus on international aid goals, commitments and measurable benchmarks. We strive to achieve our operating objectives in a number of different geographic locations but have a particular focus on Africa, which is the continent with the most resilient and enduring poverty. Our traditional areas of activity, such as the provision of basic healthcare and education, and swift effective response to emergencies will be maintained in the period ahead. However, the new resources available to the programme will allow us to explore new areas of activity, such as increased funding for fragile states and states recovering from conflict and exploring the role of ICT and the private sector in promoting growth and reducing poverty in developing countries.

Development cooperation is a whole of Government matter and our policies and actions must reflect and be reflected in the work of all Government Departments. Ensuring this coherence of approach, nationally and internationally, is a challenge for the Department. In the wider context, a particular challenge for the UN, the international community and the Governments of the developing world, in the period ahead, will be to accelerate progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These Goals provide the benchmark against which the international community, the Governments of the developing world and development agencies can be judged in relation to their commitment and drive to reduce poverty and inequality in the world.

The White Paper on Irish Aid, published in September 2006, provides an overview of the principles that underpin the aid programme. It clearly sets forth the vision of the expansion of the programme, provides a framework to guide future expenditure and offers a clear benchmark against which our performance can be measured.

The expansion of the Irish Aid programme presents enormous opportunities to make a real difference to the lives of millions of poor. However, it also presents significant challenges. Careful planning is essential to ensure optimal impact, value for money and accountability. A fundamental Management Review of the programme is underway, examining the organisational, structural, financial and administrative systems of Irish Aid in the context of anticipated growth of the programme. The review will be completed in the summer of 2008.

2008-2010: Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Increase level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) by 2012 and maximise the effectiveness of the Irish Aid programme.</p>	<p>Continued progress in increasing the budget incrementally towards the 0.7% of GNP target.</p> <p>Strengthened planning, implementation and review processes to ensure effective use of resources, optimal impact and value for money.</p>
<p>Work with Governments and other partners to reduce poverty and enhance opportunity in the developing world, with a particular focus on Africa and in line with the Millennium Development Goals.</p>	<p>In our Programme Countries, we will ensure that our Country Strategy Papers, negotiated and approved with partner Governments and donor partners, have a clear focus on the reduction of poverty.</p> <p>We will work closely with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other international development agencies in their efforts to reduce global poverty, with a particular focus on Africa.</p> <p>We will increase the number of Programme Countries from the present nine to a minimum of ten.</p>
<p>In line with best international practice, work to prevent and respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies.</p>	<p>We will provide flexible and timely funding to local, Irish and international organisations that demonstrate a clear capacity to provide effective humanitarian assistance in a manner that is responsive to local needs and adheres to humanitarian principles.</p> <p>We will ensure the effective operation of the Rapid Response Initiative (RRI), including the timely deployment of members of the Rapid Response Corp and the pre-positioning of humanitarian supplies for delivery to disaster areas.</p>
<p>Particular attention will be paid to HIV/AIDS, and also to the other issues of Gender, Environment and Governance in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all of our policy interventions.</p>	<p>Provide funding of €100 million per year to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in the developing world, with the overall aim of reducing poverty and vulnerability.</p> <p>We will actively contribute to the global response to HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, working at international, national and local levels.</p>
<p>Increase public awareness and ownership of the Irish Aid programme and provide improved information on volunteering options to members of the public.</p>	<p>We opened Irish Aid's first Public Information and Volunteering Centre in O'Connell Street, Dublin in January 2008. We will work on ensuring that the Centre will have a national reach by encouraging school visits and by promoting it as a space for development related events. The Irish Aid website will be expanded and publications will be developed in relation to exhibitions at the Centre.</p> <p>We will explore options on opening Centres in other locations. The experience of the Dublin Centre will inform our approach in this regard.</p>

Key Performance Indicators

- Level of ODA at 0.6% of GNP by 2010 and at 0.7% of GNP by 2012. The annual Budget Statement will report on progress to date.
- Strong evaluation and lesson learning culture through regular audit and review of Irish Aid and its partners.
- Country Strategy Papers developed for all programme countries with clear focus on poverty reduction and strong partnerships in place with NGOs, civil society and other international organisations, including the UN.
- Progress in Millennium Development Goal indicators.
- Tenth Programme Country chosen.
- Timely and flexible funding provided to key humanitarian partners.
- Humanitarian supplies pre-positioned at the Curragh and Brindisi, Italy and transported when required to disaster areas. Rapid deployment of the Rapid Response Corp to affected areas.
- Effective allocation of resources for the fight against HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases and the effective integration of these concerns in interventions in other areas such as health and education.
- Growing engagement in relation to food security and economic growth.
- Increased public awareness of the Irish Aid programme and volunteering opportunities.
- Publication of an Irish Aid “Operational Strategy” based on this Statement and the White Paper on Irish Aid.
- Completion of Management Review and steps taken to ensure the continued effective management of the programme thereby ensuring a world class programme into the future.

High Level Goal, 2008-2010:

To secure Ireland's interests in the EU and to contribute fully to the EU's future development.

Context and Environment

The period covered by this Statement of Strategy is likely to be one of significant change for the European Union of 27 Member States in an era of globalisation. It will be necessary to deal with the implications for Ireland and the EU of our referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

The result of the referendum of 12 June 2008 has created a complex and uncertain environment for Ireland's EU policy. This new environment poses great challenges in the pursuit of our High Level Goal of securing Ireland's best interests in a changing European Union. In the immediate term, the task facing the Department is to manage relations with our EU partners as we seek an agreed way forward.

In the search for a way forward, it will be necessary to deepen our understanding of the factors that shaped the outcome of the referendum and to identify in particular:

- the factors that shaped voting decisions and the outcome of the referendum;
- other EU-related issues that are of concern to the Irish electorate; and
- the public attitude to the EU and Ireland's future role within the Union

The Department has commissioned a research project in order to understand better the current state of national opinion about the EU, including about the future direction of the Union. The project will also analyse the factors driving public attitudes and how these concerns can be addressed, including through new approaches to promoting awareness of, and information about, the EU.

This work will provide a platform from which to devise a strategy capable of keeping Ireland at the heart of the EU in the years ahead. It should be recalled that there is broad public acceptance of the extent to which Ireland has benefited from our membership of the Union. The Union's achievements in providing economic stability, reinforcing cultural, social and environmental development, and contributing to securing peace in Northern Ireland are also widely acknowledged.

At national level, good coordination and information sharing both within the Department and with other lead Departments on cross-cutting issues will be essential. In the coming years, the EU increasingly will be required to develop responses to complex global challenges, including climate change, international terrorism, energy security, migration, global public health and pandemics. We will need to enhance our dialogue with all relevant stakeholders and to incorporate these issues into our diplomatic activities at a European and wider international level.

A critical priority will be to ensure that the Department of Foreign Affairs continues to feed into the national policy formation process relevant information from Ireland's network of diplomatic Missions. The coming years will also require concerted support from Headquarters for the work of our EU-based Embassies, and of the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels, in their vital efforts to represent Ireland's interests effectively vis a vis our EU partners and the EU institutions.

2008-2010: Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To advance Ireland's overall position, and particularly our major interests, within the European Union.</p>	<p>Continue to represent Ireland's interests within the EU, including on issues arising from the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.</p> <p>Respond to, key policy developments in Member States and within the EU institutions, particularly in relation to major issues such as, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), taxation, Climate Change, and the future financing of the Union.</p> <p>Work with other Departments to ensure coherent approaches on major issues at EU level and quality communications about key issues at home.</p> <p>Contribute fully to EU discussions on WTO, enlargement policy and coordinate our national positions.</p>
<p>To deepen public understanding of the EU and to maximise public support for Ireland's role in the Union.</p>	<p>Commission comprehensive research to understand better the reasons underlying the electorate's rejection of the proposed Constitutional amendment to permit ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, as well as trends in the public's perceptions of Ireland's EU membership.</p> <p>Integrate key findings from this study into on-going communications with our citizens about Ireland's role within the European Union.</p> <p>Reinforce Communicating Europe scheme to better highlight Ireland's role in the EU and the EU's continued relevance to Ireland's future development.</p> <p>Support the work of the National Forum on Europe and other bodies in encouraging public interest in, and engagement with, European issues.</p>
<p>Contribute to the development of coherent and effective EU external policies.</p>	<p>Co-operate closely with other relevant actors to ensure a positive, active and coherent Irish contribution to the further development of EU Common and Foreign Security Policy (CFSP).</p> <p>Contribute actively to the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), in co-operation, particularly, with the other non-militarily aligned Member States.</p>
<p>To ensure that the EU's response to emerging global challenges is effective and aligned with Irish interests.</p>	<p>Work with other stakeholders to ensure coherent Irish approaches to EU discussions on emerging issues including Climate Change, Migration, Terrorism, Energy Security, Sustainable Development, Trade Policy, and that Irish interests in these issues are taken into account in EU action at an international level.</p>



Key Performance Indicators

- Research carried out to establish reasons underlying the result of the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty ratification and conclusions drawn from this analysis
- Increased public awareness of Ireland's role in the EU.
- Production and dissemination of informational material on EU issues.
- Irish policies advocated effectively at all levels within the EU - from Summits of EU leaders to meetings of national delegates.
- The provision of quality reports from our EU Missions and properly-focused briefs to Taoiseach, Ministers and Government.
- Completion of a satisfactory programme of high level meetings with European partners.
- Regular interdepartmental coordination, contact and meetings. Focused and effective follow-up by the Department and Missions.

High Level Goal, 2008-2010:

To promote the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement by supporting the effective operation of its institutions, strengthening North/South cooperation and working for lasting reconciliation.

Context and Environment

The restoration of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement in May 2007, after more than four years in suspension, has unlocked new opportunities for the development of relations on our island. Our primary objective for the period of this Statement of Strategy is to deliver on the full potential offered by this welcome progress. This will be achieved by supporting the stable and effective operation of its institutions, strengthening North/South cooperation and working for lasting reconciliation between the two main traditions on this island.

A priority will be to ensure the successful transfer of policing and justice powers from Westminster to the devolved institutions. Consolidation of support for policing and justice, particularly at the local level, will underpin long-term stability and public confidence.

The opportunity now exists to further develop trust and enhance partnership and cooperation, including through the North-South Ministerial Council, with a view to delivering practical benefits to people on both sides of the border. The National Development Plan sets out an ambitious programme of North/South co-operation. The task now is to ensure all stakeholders, North and South, can shape a shared agenda and enjoy the benefits of closer cooperation.

The years ahead also offer new scope to build lasting reconciliation. Moving forward on issues arising from the difficult legacy of the conflict, including those related to victims, parades, sectarianism, continued security normalisation and tackling residual paramilitarism will be a priority.

Dealing with the particular social and economic needs of border communities, in partnership with relevant Departments and agencies and through the framework of international funding instruments, will be an important aspect of our work over the years ahead. We will also work to build on a British-Irish relationship which has been deepened and strengthened in the joint pursuit of a peaceful and stable society in Northern Ireland.

The political and economic support of the wider international community – including the United States and the European Union - will continue to be important in consolidating the new dispensation and promoting economic development and opportunity. In turn, this is an appropriate moment for us to seek to capture our own experience of the peace process in a way that allows us to contribute to the growing body of expertise in conflict resolution internationally.

Our efforts will benefit from the establishment of the new Joint Committee of the Oireachtas to engage with and consider ongoing developments in the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

2008-2010: Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Support the stability and effective operation of all the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and ensure the successful devolution of policing and justice powers.</p>	<p>Monitor and support progress within Northern Ireland, and maintain a comprehensive network of contacts in order to achieve maximum understanding of our respective viewpoints and policies.</p> <p>Support the work of the institutions through active participation in the North South Ministerial Council and British Irish Council and through the Secretariat of the British Irish InterGovernmental Conference in Belfast, in coordination with the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.</p> <p>Promote agreement on the devolution of policing and justice powers.</p>
<p>Promote a strong partnership between North and South and contribute to prosperity for all the people of the island through developing the all-island economy and advancing North/South co-operation.</p>	<p>Enhance North/South cooperation including through the full and effective operation of the North-South Ministerial Council, and support progress on the establishment of the North-South Parliamentary Forum and the North-South Consultative Forum.</p> <p>Work with Government Departments to implement the all-island aspects of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, and to deliver on agreed North/South investment projects.</p>
<p>Foster lasting reconciliation and mutual understanding, including through addressing post-conflict issues, combating sectarianism and tackling the particular social and economic needs of border communities.</p>	<p>Encourage and support reconciliation and cross-community initiatives, through the Reconciliation Fund, and the new Anti-Sectarianism Fund including with a focus on isolated border communities.</p> <p>Work with relevant parties, including the British Government and the devolved institutions in support of confidence-building in the communities most affected by the conflict.</p> <p>Enhance cross-border mobility, improve infrastructure links and strengthen policy co-operation, including through the North-West Gateway Initiative.</p> <p>Continue to support the work of the International Fund for Ireland and EU Peace III in encouraging contact, dialogue and reconciliation on the island of Ireland.</p>
<p>Continue to strengthen and broaden the British-Irish relationship, while building on the sustained support of our international partners as well as engaging effectively in sharing lessons learned.</p>	<p>Work to further enhance British-Irish relations, developing new levels of cooperation in areas of shared interest, and promoting bilateral contacts at all levels, including through the activities of the Irish Embassy in London and the Consulates General in Cardiff and Edinburgh.</p> <p>Active engagement in and support for the British Irish Council to advance relations between these islands</p> <p>Foster relationships with international partners, in particular the US and the EU, in continued support of the devolved institutions and reconciliation and prosperity on the island of Ireland, as well as in lesson-sharing internationally.</p>



Key Performance Indicators

- Enhanced relationships with representatives of all traditions in Northern Ireland and effective role in support of the devolved institutions.
- Successful and timely completion of St. Andrews and British Irish Council (BIC) Reviews.
- Stable transfer of justice and policing powers from Westminster to the devolved institutions.
- Regular and effective meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council.
- Successful British Irish Council summits and meetings.
- Constructive engagement with international partners.
- Implementation of all-island aspects of National Development Plan.
- Delivery of effective funding support to projects fostering lasting reconciliation and mutual understanding.
- Delivery of practical measures in support of cross-border economic activity.
- Development of 'lessons learned' documents.

High Level Goal, 2008-2010:

Promote Ireland and its bilateral relations with other countries; advance our economic interests and enhance our cultural profile overseas.

Context and Environment

Ireland's continued prosperity depends on a stable international environment and strong bilateral relations. Enhancing political, economic and cultural links with our partners in the EU and the wider international community is central to our future development.

In addition to multilateral cooperation, we need to pursue our foreign policy objectives and economic interests through strengthened bilateral relations with key partners. The United States will remain Ireland's and the EU's closest partner, both in terms of political and economic cooperation, and we will work to deepen this relationship in the period ahead. However, globalisation has resulted in the emergence of major new players on the international stage such as China and India. Russia has also re-emerged as a significant player. It will be important to strengthen engagement with these and other countries with a view to developing strategic partnerships based on shared values and goals.

The Irish economy is one of the most open in the world. Increasing access to markets and attracting inward investment has been crucial to Ireland's economic progress. Internationally traded services such as financial and computer services are increasingly important for both indigenous and foreign owned operations in Ireland.

Today, market competition is becoming more intense as new technology fuels global trading and the development of new business models. To sustain our economic prosperity in this demanding environment, Ireland must make optimal use of its resources to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by globalisation.

We will continue to support the Government's trade and investment objectives, and raise awareness of Ireland and its business potential abroad. The Government's Asia Strategy has been a particularly successful instrument in delivering on these objectives in this region. We will now seek to mirror this success with the development of a strategic approach to our relations in the Gulf region. In co-operation with other Departments, State Agencies and the private sector, we will continue to promote Ireland as a preferred business partner and a world class location for investment, scientific research and development.

Ireland's network of Embassies and Consulates is uniquely placed to advance our political and economic interests in developed and emerging markets and to raise our cultural profile overseas. Our diplomatic network is well-positioned to provide advance warning of regulatory trends in our major markets, and is a valuable source of contacts and market intelligence for Irish business entering the global marketplace. In developed markets, Embassies and Consulates assist in dealing with business environment and market access-related issues. In non-OECD countries, and especially in emerging economies where the State continues to play an important role in key sectors, the support and visible presence of a diplomatic Mission can have an appreciable impact in resolving problems and growing business.

Irish culture enjoys a high profile internationally, which is further enhanced by the cultural activities of our Missions abroad. Cultural promotion will be an important catalyst in strengthening bilateral relations and increasing awareness of Ireland.

2008-2010: Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Develop Ireland's bilateral relations – both within and outside the EU.</p>	<p>Organise high quality and targeted visits abroad by the President, the Taoiseach and Government Ministers, and visits to Ireland at Head of State and Government level with programmes which advance Ireland's relations with the countries concerned.</p> <p>Represent Ireland's interests in active bilateral dialogue with our EU partners through a systematic programme of regular contacts and visits by Irish Ministers to EU partners.</p> <p>Deepen Ireland's close bilateral relationship with the United States through regular high level contacts and visits.</p> <p>Strengthen our relations with the countries of our Asia Strategy and those of other emerging markets.</p> <p>Fully develop the potential of our relations with other countries in Europe, Canada, Asia Pacific, Africa, Middle East and Latin America especially those with which we already have diplomatic relations.</p>
<p>Promote Ireland's economic and cultural interests overseas through focussed use of all our resources, including in particular our network of diplomatic and consular missions abroad.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of Ireland as a business partner and as a world-class location for investment, scientific research and development, education, and high technology, in co-operation with the relevant Government Departments and State Agencies.</p> <p>Implement the Department's Guidelines on the economic and promotional work of our Missions abroad.</p> <p>Maximise the economic dimension of all relevant high-level inward and outward visits; in particular use the unique opportunity of Saint Patrick's Day to raise awareness of Ireland overseas and enhance Ireland's economic and cultural profile.</p> <p>Facilitate the conclusion of agreements of an economic nature in response to Irish business needs.</p> <p>Clearly establish Irish sovereign rights on the extended continental shelf by working to resolve maritime boundary issues with neighbouring states.</p> <p>Strengthen cooperation on cultural promotion with other relevant Departments and agencies, notably Culture Ireland.</p> <p>Assist Missions abroad in the development of cultural programmes, including optimising the potential of the Irish College in Paris.</p> <p>Improve the effectiveness and impact of the operation of the Fulbright Exchange Programme.</p> <p>Promote the development of "Irish Studies" in overseas third level institutions.</p>



	<p>Improve the information resources of Missions abroad by carrying out an information needs assessment and developing a strategic and integrated approach towards the supply of information materials.</p>
<p>Facilitate the development of trade and investment in emerging markets.</p>	<p>Implement the Government's Asia Strategy as it relates to the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and our Missions in Asia and develop a strategic approach for the Gulf region.</p> <p>Develop Ireland's trade and investment relationship with other emerging markets, in cooperation with State Agencies and other relevant stakeholders.</p>



Key Performance Indicators

- The number and quality of high level visits organised.
- The prioritisation within Business Plans of Embassies and Consulates of Ireland's political and economic objectives.
- Efficient and effective coordination with all relevant stakeholders; positive feedback on the Department's contribution to promoting Ireland's economic and cultural interests overseas.
- Conclusion of international agreements of value to Irish business, e.g. Double Taxation Agreements, Air Transport Agreements, etc.
- Effective contribution to maintaining and extending access for Irish manufactured goods, services and food products.
- Continued support for the Government's Asia Strategy through the facilitation of increased economic linkages.
- Effective contribution to further developing trade relations with the Gulf region and other emerging markets, particularly in relation to ICT and education.
- Effective contribution to the governance of the Irish College and of the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris.
- Improved operation of the Fulbright Programme in Ireland.
- Improved information resources for Missions abroad.

High Level Goal, 2008-2010:

To provide a high quality passport and consular service to all Irish citizens and actively engage with our Diaspora.

Context and Environment

Irish people are travelling abroad in ever greater numbers to a wider variety of destinations, for both leisure and business purposes. In 2007 alone, Irish residents made almost eight million trips abroad. Continued affluence, strengthened business links abroad and ease of foreign travel means that this trend can be expected to continue for the foreseeable future. We will continue to provide a first class passport and consular service to Irish citizens and, where required, will further improve this service in the period ahead.

The current Irish passport is internationally recognised as one of the most technically advanced and secure passports in use. The implementation of specific passport legislation during the lifetime of this Statement will give even greater certainty to the passport service and reduce the risk of passport theft and fraud.

The increasing number of Irish citizens travelling abroad brings an inevitable increase in the demand for consular assistance and in the complexity of consular cases which we address. In addition to providing routine consular assistance, we need to be able to react efficiently and effectively to major international crises abroad involving large numbers of Irish citizens. The lessons learnt from our successful response to and management of the 9/11 tragedy, the Asian Tsunami and the 2006 war in Lebanon have helped us to establish a crisis planning system in line with best international practice.

In the period ahead, we will work to further enhance our engagement with the Irish Diaspora. Our emigrants' groups programme remains essential to addressing urgent needs among Irish emigrants. While the primary focus of the programme has been to support frontline information and welfare services for vulnerable Irish emigrants, increased resources have enabled the programme to expand to include a number of capital projects, as well as projects that foster a greater sense of community abroad, including support for social, sporting and heritage activities.

Recent years have seen a rapid rise in the number of foreign nationals, requiring visas, who wish to visit and work in Ireland. Against this background, the risks posed by visa fraud will continue to present a key challenge for our diplomatic and consular Missions abroad. We will continue to work closely with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to assist them in providing a secure, fair and user friendly visa system through our Missions abroad.

2008-2010: Objectives, Strategies and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Strategies
<p>To provide an efficient, high quality and secure passport service to the public.</p>	<p>Continuously review and improve our service and productivity, taking account of customer feedback.</p> <p>Consider the recommendations of an independent Value For Money and Policy Review of the passport service.</p> <p>Codify and strengthen the legal framework for the passport service.</p> <p>Combat passport fraud.</p>
<p>To ensure that Irish citizens receive timely, courteous and effective consular assistance and service when required.</p>	<p>Improve quality and efficiency of the consular service provided, including at Irish Missions abroad.</p> <p>Increase public awareness of service available.</p> <p>Ensure that our crisis planning arrangements continue to be in line with international best practice.</p>
<p>To assist the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in implementing a fair and secure immigration system.</p>	<p>Effective liaison with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.</p> <p>Efficient processing of visa applications in our Missions abroad.</p>
<p>To coordinate support for Irish organisations providing welfare to vulnerable Irish emigrants, and to work with voluntary agencies at home and abroad that assist Irish emigrants, including those who wish to return to Ireland.</p>	<p>Implement the recommendations in the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Support for Irish Emigrant Groups carried out in 2007.</p> <p>Coordinate with Government Departments and agencies providing services which impact on emigrants.</p> <p>Continue to work to resolve the position of the undocumented Irish in the United States and to establish arrangements for future migration flow between Ireland and the US.</p> <p>Enhance the capacity of the voluntary agencies to engage effectively with central and local authorities in their host countries.</p> <p>Encourage closer cooperation between statutory and voluntary agencies in Ireland and abroad.</p> <p>Ensure that funding is directed to organisations that reach the most vulnerable Irish people abroad, in particular the elderly.</p>



Key Performance Indicators

- Successful implementation of (voluntary) on-line registration for Irish citizens travelling or living overseas.
- Widespread distribution and public awareness of the Consular Charter.
- Roll-out of the Consular Data-base and Prisoners Data-base to be well advanced by end 2008
- Rapid deployment of Emergency Consular Assistance Teams when required.
- Roll out of “Automated Visa Application Tracking System” (AVATS) to Missions abroad by end -2008.
- Meet standards set out in the Department’s customer charter and its guaranteed passport service levels.
- Implementation of new Passports Act.
- Cooperation with the General Registrar’s Office and other State Agencies to strengthen safeguards against passport fraud.
- Ensure that the Irish passport continues to meet all International Civil Aviation Organisation standards.
- Timely consideration of the recommendations of both the Value for Money and Policy Reviews of the Support for Irish Emigrant Groups and of the Passport Service.



Part III

Implementation/Delivery

Critical Success Factors

Successful delivery of our objectives is critically dependent upon the effective management of the Department's resources and our ability to adapt and manage change. The major challenge over the three years ahead will be to maintain and improve upon existing levels of service within the limit of the resources available to the Department.

Effective resource management encompasses a broad range of disciplines and tools:

- Human Resource Management
- Value for Money
- Information and Communications Technology
- Customer Service

The Capacity to Deliver

In a globalised world where events and contexts are constantly changing, it has never been more critical that the Department's structures at Headquarters are fully appropriate to the tasks in hand; that its capabilities, at home and abroad, are sufficiently robust yet flexible to respond rapidly and effectively to the challenges and opportunities that arise; and that it has the right resources, in the right place and at the right time to deliver positive outcomes for the Government and for our citizens. In this regard, the Department constantly reviews and evaluates specific areas of its work with the objective of ensuring that the Department makes optimum use of its resources, both financial and human, in delivering its goals, objectives and priorities.

Arising from the White Paper on Irish Aid, a Management Review of the systems and structures to deliver our aid programme is being completed this summer. Its outcome will be crucial to ensuring that the Department has the necessary structures, systems and resources to effectively manage the expanding aid programme in the years to come.

Both the business planning arrangements and the performance management and development (PMDS) systems in the Department are important tools in ensuring that the organisation, at all levels, is fully focused on the achievement and delivery of the goals and objectives outlined in this Statement. Senior management is, therefore, committed to further enhancing the operation of these arrangements and procedures in the Department over the next three years.

Enhanced coordination with all relevant Government Departments and State Agencies on cross-cutting issues is also essential to ensuring a strategic "whole of Government" perspective to advancing Irish interests. Annex 1 identifies those issues where other Departments and/or agencies have a role to play and details the action required by us to ensure a joined-up approach.

Human Resource Management

In discharging its human resource management responsibilities, the Department recognises that the quality of its staff represents a major asset. We seek to fully comply with the obligations from successive Partnership Agreements, with the commitments arising from the various initiatives under the Strategic Management Initiative and with the best practice employment standards across the Civil Service. With over 1,200 staff distributed across the world, we will continue to review and refine our Human Resource Management Strategy, policies and practices to optimise the performance and professional fulfilment of our staff.

As part of continuing efforts to enhance staff development and performance, we will build on existing training programmes focussed on our main business objectives. In addition, following renewed training of staff on the Performance Management and Development System, PMDS will be integrated fully into our human resource management and applied systematically across the Department. Under the guidance of the Management Advisory Committee, various components of Human Resource policy will continue to be developed in consultation with staff.

DECENTRALISATION

Under the Government's decentralisation programme, the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Department of Foreign Affairs, which is Irish Aid's Headquarters, is decentralising to Limerick. In line with sanction from the Department of Finance, the total number of posts decentralising to Limerick is set at 138.

Good progress has been made and personnel have either been assigned to, or identified for, 112 posts or approximately 81% of the 138 posts scheduled to transfer to Limerick. The remaining 26 posts largely comprise the Development Specialist grades.

An advance party moved to interim office premises in Limerick in 2007, with 60 officers currently in place. It is expected that the remaining staff of Irish Aid will transfer to Limerick in autumn 2008, on completion and fit-out of the new permanent offices.

Strategies are in place to ensure continued operational effectiveness and service delivery during this period of change, including after decentralisation has been completed.

Value for Money

Our goal is to use the Department's financial resources efficiently and effectively in pursuit of our strategic goals, ensuring value for money in both programme and administrative expenditure. The geographical reach of the Department, often resulting in relatively small expenditure at a large number of locations around the world, presents particular challenges in this regard, but they are challenges we can meet.

The active pursuit of value for money will increasingly inform the work of the Department on a day-to-day basis. To this end, the Department has established a Procurement Management Unit, responsible for promoting a strategic approach to the achievement of value for money by integrating value for money principles within the Department's management processes; developing and implementing an annual Corporate Procurement Plan; and, promoting best procurement and project management practices throughout the Department.

We will continue to make use of specific Value for Money Reviews in areas of significant expenditure. Two such reviews – on the Passport Service and on expenditure in the fight against HIV/AIDS in developing countries – will be completed and published early in the period covered by this Statement of Strategy. Value for Money Reviews, and other independent evaluations, contribute both to accountability and lesson learning.

In 2008, we will identify further areas of expenditure, across both of the Department's Votes, which will be subject to further such reviews in the coming years. These exercises, including an Efficiency Review conducted in early 2008, will be used to continue to improve policy and business outcomes in the Department, and to ensure that the work of the Department is benchmarked against best practice in the Public Service and internationally.

In addition, an extensive programme of audit visits to our Missions abroad will continue to be undertaken annually. Considerable audit work will also be carried out with partners in receipt of development aid funding. The work of the Department's Evaluation and Audit Unit will continue to be overseen by an independent Audit Committee.

With 75 offices spread across the world, a major challenge for the Department is to maintain coherence and effectiveness across the organisation. Our internal inspection process will continue to play an important part in meeting this challenge. Over the lifetime of this Statement of Strategy, the Department will maintain a programme of regular and systematic inspection visits to Missions abroad to help ensure that their work contributes as effectively as possible to the achievement of the Department's goals and objectives, that their resources are adequate for the task, and that their management systems and procedures are robust and efficient.

Under the Management Information Framework (MIF), the Department has implemented a range of measures to ensure more efficient financial transactions and more effective use of resources, as well as to assist decision-making about resource allocation. With the implementation of the remaining objectives in the MIF Project Plan, we will make further progress in all of these areas.

At the same time as working to achieve value for money, we must ensure that we can deliver on the Government's policy priorities. This Statement of Strategy, by setting out performance indicators against which progress in achieving our goals can be measured, combined with the Department's Annual Output Statement, will enhance the alignment of resource allocations to business priorities over the coming years.

Customer Service

The Department of Foreign Affairs has a diverse range of internal and external customers:

- Citizens at home and abroad
- Passport holders
- Irish business
- Government Departments
- State Agencies
- Other Governments
- Diplomatic Corp accredited to Ireland
- International Organisations
- Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)

We remain committed to providing the highest standard of service to all our customers, at home and abroad, in accordance with the principles of Quality Customer Service approved by Government. Practical examples of our customer service commitments include our guarantee that a person using the Passport Express Service will receive his or her passport within ten working days, same day service for authentication of official documents, and the provision of an out of hours service at home and abroad for those who require passports on an emergency basis, both in the evening and at weekends.

Our Customer Service Action Plan underlines our practical commitment to fulfilling the obligations of the Department's Customer Charter, both of which are available on the Department's website.

In line with Government policy of promoting evidence-based policy making, we will undertake Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) and make use of our statistical data in the preparation of all proposed primary legislation and significant statutory instruments. Together with the



Government's Better Regulation Unit, we will implement a strategy aimed at improving RIA awareness carried out in respect of the formulation of legislation and policies at an EU level.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

The strategic deployment of information and communications technologies across the Department's network of offices is an essential enabler in the achievement of business objectives.

Recent years have seen significant investment in, and development of, the Department's ICT infrastructure. The Department's ICT Strategy 2007-2010 has identified the challenges and opportunities facing the Department. Work in the coming period will focus primarily on addressing the issues of effective information management and mobility requirements.

Over the next three years, we will also seek to maximise the potential of our website as a primary public source of information on Irish foreign policy, Ireland's treaty relations, services to Irish citizens and citizens of other countries interested in Ireland.



Issue	Other Departments/ Agencies Involved	Action Required by DFA
Response to humanitarian emergencies	D/Defence and other relevant Government Departments	Effective operation of the Rapid Response Initiative (RPI), including the deployment of members of the Rapid Response Corp and the pre-positioning of humanitarian supplies
Promote Irish Aid and Development Issues	D/Education and Science	Coordinate material
<p>European Union</p> <p>Advance Ireland's interests in the EU</p> <p>Deepen public understanding of the EU</p>	<p>All Departments</p> <p>All Departments, National Forum on Europe</p>	<p>Work with other Departments to ensure effective and coherent approaches within the EU</p> <p>Support the work of the National Forum on Europe and other bodies in encouraging public interest in, and engagement with, European issues</p>
<p>Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish Relations</p> <p>Strengthened North/South cooperation</p>	<p>All Government Departments, in particular D/Taoiseach and D/JELR, and other relevant agencies; Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement</p> <p>All relevant Departments</p>	<p>Actively participate in the North South Ministerial Council, British-Irish Council, and British-Irish InterGovernmental Conference</p> <p>Work with Government Departments to implement the all-island aspects of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, and to deliver on agreed North/South investment projects</p>



Issue	Other Departments/ Agencies Involved	Action Required by DFA
<p>Promote Ireland and its bilateral relations with other countries; advance our economic interests and enhance our cultural profile overseas</p>	<p>Aras an Uachtaráin, all Government Departments, Offices and State Agencies</p>	<p>Organise high quality and targeted visits abroad by the President, the Taoiseach and other Ministers, and visits to Ireland at Head of State and Government level</p> <p>Maximise the economic dimension of visits</p> <p>Develop a systematic programme of regular contacts and visits by Irish Ministers to EU partners and other countries of key political, economic and cultural interest</p> <p>Participate actively in the Asia Strategy High Level Group and the Inter-departmental Group on Market Access for Food and Beverages</p>
<p>Services for Emigrants; Consular Services</p> <p>Coordinate support for Irish organisations providing welfare to vulnerable Irish emigrants and work with voluntary agencies that assist Irish emigrants</p> <p>Visa Issues</p>	<p>Various Departments</p> <p>D/JELR; D/ET&E</p>	<p>Coordinate with all relevant Departments and agencies providing services which impact on emigrants</p> <p>Ensure effective cooperation in relation to visa and work visa/authorisation matters</p>