



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

# Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

## Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present the Statement of Strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs for the 2021-2023 period. This Statement of Strategy outlines the key priorities for my Department for the next three years and how we will deliver meaningful outcomes for Irish citizens, at home and abroad and how we will use and grow our influence around the world.

The COVID-19 crisis has had a profound impact on societies and economies around the globe. Overcoming the challenges that the pandemic presents to the health and wellbeing of our citizens is the central task of Government. Delivering recovery in all its aspects requires deeper global engagement by Ireland at EU, UN and bilateral levels and my Department will continue to lead this global effort on behalf of our citizens.

We are an island nation, bound together by solidarity, united in our determination to play our part in the world. We look up and out at the world from the solid foundation of our common European home. As a committed member of the European Union, we will work with our European colleagues to help each other during this time of crisis, and as we rebuild our economies. The EU's founding values of peace, solidarity, greater cooperation, free movement, free trade and democracy are needed today more than ever, particularly as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis.

Membership of the UN is a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy. At a time of ever-more complex global threats, which have no international boundaries, such as climate change and pandemics, only coordinated international action and collaboration will bring about solutions. As we take up our seat on the UN Security Council for the 2021-2022 session, we will play a constructive role through our commitment to peacebuilding, human rights, disarmament, sustainable development and a rules-based international environment.

We are committed to working with all communities and traditions on the island of Ireland to build consensus around a shared future. This consensus will be underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement and by absolute respect for the principle of consent.

We will work to protect the island of Ireland from the worst effects of Brexit, and as our inextricably linked histories of Ireland and Britain enter a new phase, we will endeavour to foster enhanced links between our states to protect and strengthen our bilateral relations.

Recognising the significance of the transatlantic relationship between Ireland and the US, we will strengthen our diplomatic, cultural, and economic relationship with the US at all levels, and will act as a bridge in the transatlantic relationship between the EU and US.

Delivering first class consular and passport services to our citizens will remain an essential priority. Our global diaspora remain an integral part of the wider Irish family and my Department will continue to work with them in maintaining and deepening this vital relationship.

Ireland's Overseas Development Assistance programme is an essential element of our overall foreign policy and national presence overseas, enabling the country to respond to complex human needs and humanitarian crises around the world. Now is the time to reinforce our ambition and the Government is committed to reaching our contribution goal of 0.7% of GNI on overseas development cooperation, and our work to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ireland will provide support for those countries that are poorest and most vulnerable to climate shocks and ensure that climate change is included as a core theme in strategy development where Ireland has a significant development cooperation programme including Small Island Developing States. As a small island nation ourselves, we will lead by example in protecting our oceans and will emphasise climate action as a priority in our multilateral engagement.

Our Missions abroad are charged with promoting Ireland, identifying new markets and opportunities for Irish business, and protecting and supporting Irish citizens. We will continue to implement *Global Ireland 2025* and, having regard to available resources, we will seek to double our global footprint.

I look forward to working with my colleagues, Colm Brophy, T.D., Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development and Thomas Byrne T.D., Minister of State for European Affairs, with colleagues across Government and with the dedicated and talented officials of my Department, at home and abroad, to deliver on these priorities over the coming years.

**Simon Coveney, T.D.**  
**Minister for Foreign Affairs**

## Foreword from the Secretary General



This Statement of Strategy sets out the vision, mission and objectives of the Department of Foreign Affairs for the next three years to 2023.

It has been developed following engagement by Minister Coveney with the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, consultation with our colleagues across Government, and internal consideration.

Nobody doubts the scale of the challenges we face over the next three years. The economic and social shocks experienced across the globe because of the COVID-19 pandemic will have significant long-term consequences for the public services we provide.

We will also need to continue to adapt our ways of working in new and often adverse conditions. A skilled and resilient workforce of truly dedicated public servants at home and abroad is our greatest resource. As Secretary General, I am committed to ensuring that we support and develop that resource to the greatest extent possible.

This Strategy Statement sets out our shared values as an organisation, supporting and promoting diversity; gender equality and the fair and equal treatment of all; an ethos of integrity; the highest standards of professionalism; leadership and excellence; and a culture of accountability, innovation, transparency and efficiency; delivering the highest quality service to our citizens.

In support of the national and global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and to promote sustainability, the Department of Foreign Affairs is committed to minimising our carbon footprint and to increased sustainability as core to our operations at home and abroad through the lifetime of this strategy.

**Niall Burgess**  
**Secretary General**

### Mission and Values

**Mission:** The mission of the Department of Foreign Affairs is to serve the Irish people, promote their values and advance their prosperity and interests abroad, and to provide the Government with the capabilities, analysis and influence to ensure that Ireland derives the maximum benefit from all areas of its external engagement.

**Values:** The organisational values of the Department of Foreign Affairs are: **Diversity; Integrity; Leadership; Service; Excellence.**

## Key Challenges, Risks and Opportunities in our Operating Environment

This Statement of Strategy provides the framework for the articulation of this Department's commitments under the *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future*, as well as the themes set out in: *The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World*; *A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development*; and, *Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025*.

The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 has affected societies and economies around the globe and will leave a lasting impact on our world. The pandemic has forced governments and organisations of all types to rethink their traditional operating models and how they deliver on their priorities while faced with difficult trade-offs around public health and the economic and social challenges being impacted.

Beyond the health and human tragedy of COVID-19, the pandemic has triggered a serious global economic crisis. Uncertainties about the future course of the pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences will persist for some time. Ireland's national recovery effort, in all its aspects, will be the central focus of our work. Our membership of the European Union will underpin our recovery strategy. Intensifying our collaboration and co-operation with State Agencies and Government Departments through a revitalised *Team Ireland* approach will ensure a nimble, effective and responsive effort which meets the needs and expectations of our business sector and citizens. Mobilising and galvanising all our capabilities, at home and abroad, will achieve this aim, in particular our diaspora, our missions overseas and our network of relationships.

The challenge of the pandemic also presents opportunities to adapt the way in which we work, to have maximum impact in achieving our priorities. The next three years will bring particular challenges for Ireland in managing the the political and economic consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. The Government will build on the foundations laid in the Good Friday Agreement to enhance peace, prosperity and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and to strengthen North-South cooperation and relationships. It will also draw on core principles of the Agreement - consent and respect for all traditions on our island - in our efforts to build a consensus on a shared future. The relationship with our nearest neighbour is entering a new phase following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, and the Government is determined to develop and strengthen the bilateral British-Irish relationship in these new circumstances, including through a Strategic Review.

It will be essential that we seek to influence and drive the future direction of the European Union through increased engagement with our twenty-six partners and the EU institutions. The wellbeing of our people and economy will remain inextricably linked to the success of the European project.

As serious as the economic implications of COVID-19 are in Ireland, they do not compare to the potential impacts of the virus in the global south. Ireland's Overseas Development Assistance programme is an essential element of our overall foreign policy and national presence overseas, enabling the country to respond to complex human needs and humanitarian crises around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance concept of health diplomacy to make global public health a central issue in foreign policy.

The next ten years are critical if we are to address the climate and biodiversity crisis which threatens our safe future on this planet. Actions, behavioural changes and commitments to change, to support climate and decarbonisation priorities will be a core tenet of this Strategy over the next three years.

## Consultation

The preparation of the Statement of Strategy has been informed by consultation across Government Departments, with the Oireachtas through the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence and an internal consultation process with all staff.

## Human Rights and Equality Assessment and Considerations

In line with our obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, the Department is committed to proofing its policies, procedures and services across its business areas to ensure we comply with our requirements in the area of human rights and equality. The Department will carry out an assessment of the human rights and equality issues relevant to its functions to identify concrete actions to be taken forward in line with our obligations under the Act.

## Implementation, Monitoring and Review

This Statement of Strategy will provide the basis for the organisation and management of the Department over the coming three years. The strategic goals, outcomes and outputs will inform and guide the annual business planning and risk management process. The targeted actions identified through the business planning process will dictate the setting of individual and team objectives through the operation of the Performance Management and Development System.

Progress on delivery of this Strategy will be subject to regular review and we will publish an Annual Report reflecting the progress achieved in delivering on the strategic priorities set out in this Statement of Strategy.

The Department is committed to ensure an open and accountable approach in its engagement with the public and the Oireachtas. Full details on this and on the structures and assignments of responsibility for the Department can be found in its *Corporate Governance Framework*.

## High Level Strategic Goals

This Strategy provides the overarching work plan for the Department across five high level goals.

**Goal 1 - Our People:** To serve our people at home and abroad and to promote reconciliation and cooperation

**Goal 2 - Our Europe:** To advance Ireland's interests, influence and values in our shared Europe

**Goal 3 - Our Values:** To work for a fairer, just, secure and sustainable world

**Goal 4 - Our Prosperity:** To advance Ireland's prosperity by extending our influence and promoting our interests internationally

**Goal 5 - Our Effectiveness:** To strengthen our effectiveness and capacity to deliver on our goals

Set out below are the outcomes we will achieve under each of these strategic goals and the outputs that we will deliver

## Goal 1 - Our People: To serve our people at home and abroad and to promote reconciliation and cooperation

Outcomes	Priority Outputs
<p><b>Sustained peace and political progress and enhanced reconciliation in Northern Ireland, increased North-South and East-West cooperation, the further development of the all-island economy and building consensus on a shared future</b></p>	<p>Support for the stable and effective operation of all the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement; sustained progress in implementing the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements, including the New Decade, New Approach agreement; advancing the Stormont House Agreement; legacy institutions; and, progress on relevant Dáil motions</p>
	<p>Maintain as a key priority the full and successful implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland and protect the integrity of the Single Market and Ireland's place in it</p>
	<p>Advance the commitments on deepening North-South cooperation, including through biannual meetings of the North South Ministerial Council in plenary format and regular Ministerial-level sectoral meetings, and through the support of the work of the North-South Implementation Bodies</p>
	<p>Strong support for, and engagement with, the Shared Island Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach, working together towards building consensus on a shared island</p>
	<p>Build a strong bilateral relationship with the UK, reflecting our close political, economic, and people-to-people connections through a strategic review of British-Irish relations and an enhanced framework for high-level political engagement (including through the BIIGC and British Irish Council), and to ensure continued deep cooperation between these islands</p>
	<p>Continued annual support for civil society and community organisations through the Department's Reconciliation Fund; a new strategy for the Reconciliation Fund; support for the work of the International Fund for Ireland; roll-out of an inclusive programme for the second phase of the Decade of Centenaries</p>
<p><b>Modernised and accessible passport and consular services provided to our citizens with optimum use of digital platforms</b></p>	<p>Effectively meet the high demand for passports and Foreign Birth Registrations through continued reform and digitisation whilst ensuring high levels of security and data protection requirements</p>
	<p>Effective consular advice, assistance and services delivered to our citizens, in line with the commitments in the Consular Strategy 2019-2022, including through a strengthened Honorary Consul network and particularly in response to the impact of COVID-19</p>
	<p>Contribute to Government decisions on travel advice for Irish citizens, particularly in light of COVID-19, including through liaison with other EU Member States, as appropriate</p>
<p><b>Increased connections across and within diaspora communities to expand our influence, support our emigrants, and harness the contribution from the diaspora to support economic recovery</b></p>	<p>Ensure the welfare of Irish citizens abroad remains at the core of our diaspora support, especially the most vulnerable and particularly where impacted by COVID-19, including through the Emigrant Support Programme and through the implementation of the Government's new Diaspora Strategy</p>
	<p>Participate in the planning and communication of a referendum on extending the franchise in presidential elections to Irish citizens living outside the State</p>
	<p>Support those who wish to return to Ireland and address barriers facing them; build new connections with the non-traditional diaspora; and, develop educational and work opportunities in Ireland for members of third and fourth generation Irish diaspora</p>
	<p>Focus on diaspora engagement to strengthen the contribution to economic recovery</p>
	<p>Continued close cooperation with the Department of Justice to deliver an effective and efficient visa service abroad through our Mission network</p>

## Goal 2 - Our Europe: To advance Ireland's interests, influence and values in our shared Europe

Outcomes	Priority Outputs
<b>Ireland protects and advances its interests within the EU, including the EU-UK relationship, and proactively shapes the Union's future development through closer cooperation with our European partners</b>	Enhanced bilateral cooperation with our partners in Europe by strengthening and leveraging our mission network, deepening new and existing alliances, and maintaining high-level engagement
	Whole-of-Government coherence on EU issues and in the implementation of EU related matters in the Programme for Government
	Strengthened investment in building Ireland's influence and presence on EU policy priorities, in EU institutions and in the analysis of policy and institutional developments within the EU and its Member States
	Targeted communication and engagement with domestic stakeholders on Ireland's EU priorities and the role of the EU on the global stage
	A future EU-UK relationship in which Ireland's interests and objectives are protected and advanced
<b>Strong contribution to implementation of the EU's external policies and to peace and security in Europe and its neighbourhood, as well as the transatlantic relationship between the EU and the US</b>	Ensure Ireland's values, interests, priorities and commitments are integrated in the development of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and in its external policies including CSDP, development co-operation, human rights, trade, and enlargement
	Support the EU's efforts to promote peace and security and sustainable resolutions to crises and conflicts in Europe and its neighbourhood, including through multilateral organisations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe
	Support the strengthening of the EU's leadership role in safeguarding the rules-based global order, based on the UN system, and efforts to build the EU's capacity to promote and protect the values and interests of the Union decisively, effectively and strategically throughout the world and in multilateral organisations
	Act as a bridge in the transatlantic relationship between the EU and the US

## Goal 3 - Our Values: To work for a fairer, just, secure and sustainable world

Outcomes	Priority Outputs
<b>A Secure World: A stable and secure rules based international environment</b>	Sustained contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, in particular during our term on the UN Security Council 2021-22, ensuring that Ireland's values are reflected in our bilateral and multilateral engagements
	Work to strengthen UN peacekeeping and peacekeeping reform and play an active role in the development of the European Security and Defence Policy, including participation in UN-mandated, EU led, military crisis management missions, as well as in EU civilian missions
	Promotion of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation and the meaningful engagement of women, youth and civil society in these processes, drawing on our lived experience of peacebuilding and peacekeeping
	Active pursuit of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as part of an integrated approach to conflict management, human rights and sustainable development
	Defend and promote a safe, secure, free and open global cyberspace, and tackle the global digital divide and digital gender divide
<b>A Just World: Promotion and protection of human rights internationally</b>	Promotion of a strong human rights agenda, with a focus on the most vulnerable, through our membership of the EU, the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other multilateral organisations, as well as in our bilateral dialogues
	Championing of the rule of law and international accountability

<b>A Fairer World: Progress in eradicating poverty, hunger and promoting inclusive economic growth</b>	Delivery of a high quality aid programme in support of the Government commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance by 2030
	Principled humanitarian assistance, resilience building and strengthened interlinkages between peace, development and humanitarian
	Promote inclusive economic growth and fair trade through supporting initiatives that seek to foster trade and investment and the sustainable management of debt in developing countries
	Increase in Ireland's allocations to interventions directly related to achieving gender equality, and scale up our engagement to integrate gender equality across all interventions and in our wider foreign policy
	Contribute to an integrated Governmental policy on migration
<b>A Sustainable World: A framework for sustainable development addressing climate change, public health, food security and sustainable economic recovery</b>	Ensure that Ireland's Overseas Development Assistance is supportive of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals
	Active engagement in whole-of-Government coordination and strong multilateral engagement for Ireland's implementation of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals aimed at ending poverty, reducing inequality, and tackling climate change
	Contribute to the scaling-up of climate finance and strengthen the new Climate Unit within the Department to contribute to the work on Ireland's response to the global climate crisis, including strengthening engagement with other Government departments on international climate policy and funding
	Continue to support global health efforts to enable a recovery from COVID-19 in more fragile and vulnerable contexts through bilateral health programme support, multilateral efforts and the <i>Team Europe</i> global response, including in the area of vaccine research and access to healthcare
	Support for those countries that are poorest and most vulnerable to climate shocks and ensure that climate change is included as a core theme in country strategy development where Ireland has a significant development cooperation programme, including Small Island Developing States as well as supporting interventions directly related to oceans and the blue economy
<b>Goal 4 - Our Prosperity: To advance Ireland's prosperity by extending our influence and promoting our interests internationally</b>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Priority Outputs</b>
<b>Double our global footprint and mobilise our capabilities at home and abroad to ensure Ireland's national economic recovery is a central focus of our work, through our people, our missions, our network of relationships and a strengthened <i>Team Ireland</i> approach</b>	Contribute to the national effort in addressing the impact of COVID-19, through securing essential equipment, providing information on international developments of the pandemic and engaging with the global COVID vaccine effort
	Implementation of the <i>Global Ireland</i> strategy in close cooperation with the State Agencies to deepen and diversify export markets, inward investment, regenerative tourism and encourage and facilitate scientific and research collaboration, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the UK's departure from the EU and the economic impact of COVID-19
	Advance Ireland's economic and trading interests in multilateral contexts, including the WTO and OECD
	Strengthen our political, diplomatic, cultural, and economic relationship with the US at all levels, recognising the unique significance of our transatlantic relationship, including through implementation of Ireland's Strategy for the United States and Canada 2019-2025
	Implementation of the whole-of-Government strategies for Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, France and Germany, and the development of other regional strategies as a key platform for contributing to the Government's <i>National Economic Plan</i> and its other sectoral strategies
	Strengthen the <i>Team Ireland</i> approach to promote market penetration and diversification through leadership of local market teams, participation on the Export Trade Council, and advancing the <i>Ireland House</i> model



	Work closely with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to develop a new trade, tourism and investment strategy as well as seizing opportunities arising from the EU Industrial Strategy. Forge alliances with other EU Member States and ensure that Ireland's interests and values are reflected in any proposals for EU strategic autonomy
<b>Promote and enhance international understanding of Ireland as a place to visit, work, invest and study</b>	Coordination of the annual programme of Ministerial visits to deepen existing relationships and forge new linkages across a range of markets, particularly St Patrick's Day Ministerial-led trade and high level promotional visits, including through the use of digital platforms in response to the constraints of COVID-19
	Play a leading role working with State Agencies and other partners, to deliver high-quality and targeted promotional activities in support of our shared trade, investment, tourism and education objectives, including a strong presence at EXPO 2020, to raise Ireland's visibility, enhance our international reputation and promote Ireland as a gateway to EU markets
	Contribute to the global <i>Team Ireland</i> communications effort to increase visibility, raise awareness and enhance Ireland's reputation as a great place in which to live, work, do business, invest and visit
<b>Strong contribution to the enhancement of Ireland's reputation, visibility and influence through wider and deeper international appreciation of our values, policies, culture and global impact</b>	Support and fund promotion and outreach work by Missions, to raise Ireland's visibility and to enhance our international reputation
	Foreign policy and <i>Global Ireland</i> priorities advanced through digital, cultural, and public diplomacy initiatives and support to priority projects such as Expo 2020 and 2022 programmes marking centenaries of the State and <i>Ulysses</i>
	New communications strategy to improve domestic and international understanding of Ireland's international development programme
	The provision of curated programming, digital resources and sectoral expertise, including specialist Cultural Officers in priority locations. Irish artists and creative professionals supported to achieve their international ambitions, including through the Mission network
	Cultural exchange, partnership and mutual understanding advanced between the Irish people and other peoples and cultures, including through strategic investment in flagship cultural centres
<b>Goal 5 - Our Effectiveness: To strengthen our effectiveness and capacity to deliver on our goals</b>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Priority Outputs</b>
<b>A Department that is responsive to national and global developments, with a doubling of our global influence to deliver for Government and our citizens</b>	Strengthen our capacity to reinforce bilateral and multilateral relations, expand Ireland's global influence and impact and build our ability to respond to the ongoing response to COVID-19 and other global emergencies, particularly climate change
	Effective response and management of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on staff and operations through robust risk management, strengthened business continuity and crisis management structures
	Implementation of <i>Global Ireland</i> to double Ireland's global footprint in the period to 2025 through the opening of new Missions and deepening engagement in priority locations
	Policy development processes that reflect best practice; are innovative, efficient and result in effective, forward-looking and flexible policies, with robust implementation plans
	The promotion and development of a culture of innovation in the Department to improve the effectiveness of our policies and processes
	Implementation of the Department's Green Foreign Ministry Action Plan to reduce the carbon footprint of our foreign affairs activity
	Active leadership and contribution to public sector reform, including through the Civil Service Renewal 2030 initiative
<b>An adaptable and resilient global workforce and an</b>	Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy 2019-2022, complemented by strengthened strategic workforce planning to ensure an agile response to deliver on our objectives
	Ensure effective management practices, development of enhanced health and safety and security culture, strong internal communications and measures to strengthen staff resilience across the organisation

<b>integrated organisation that is a great place to work</b>	Embed a culture of dignity and respect in the workplace, emphasising gender, equality, diversity and inclusion
	Strengthened supports for our posted and local staff overseas including in response to the impacts of COVID-19 including a flexible model for relief of our staff overseas and temporary deployments
	Implementation of the new Learning and Development Framework, fostering capable and agile teams, at home and abroad, and significantly enhanced foreign languages capability
	Implementation of a new ICT Strategy and action plan to leverage technology to support new innovative ways of working and maximising all aspects of digital diplomacy
	Implementation of a new Property Management Strategy to deliver appropriate, safe, secure and sustainable workplaces at home and abroad, taking into account new and future ways of working
<b>An open and accountable Department delivering best practice in governance and organisational performance</b>	Effective leadership, strategic direction, risk management, policy development, business continuity and oversight provided by the Management Board, in line with the Department's Corporate Governance Framework
	Information and other public service needs of citizens delivered through open and transparent communication systems and provision of a professional and effective digital presence
	Robust oversight of the Department's budget, including Overseas Development Assistance expenditure
	Effective implementation of our corporate compliance obligations, including in relation to Climate Action, the Irish language, Freedom of Information, Data Protection, health and safety, records management, human rights and equality
	Maintenance of an effective Evaluation and Audit function that provides management with objective assessment, assurance, advice and insight regarding corporate performance, governance, risk management and internal control
	The effective delivery of projects using best practice project management approach governed by the Programme Oversight Board



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