

## **Note of Introduction**

### **July 2014**

#### **The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

The Department is one of the oldest Ministries of the State. It was created at the very first meeting of Dáil Éireann on 21 January 1919. Between 1922 and 1971, it was known as the Department of External Affairs, then as the Department of Foreign Affairs and, since the current Government took office, as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Twenty-seven persons have previously held office as Minister, with a number holding the position for more than one term.

While the core responsibilities of the Department have been relatively consistent over the period since its creation, the relative demands of the various responsibilities have shifted over time, with significant resources being devoted in the past to pursuing our interests in the EU and the Northern Ireland Peace Process. The Department is now concentrating far greater resources on the promotion of Ireland's economic interests and support for Irish citizens abroad than was the case heretofore.

The current mission of the Department of Foreign Affairs can be summarised in a single sentence as being "to promote and protect the values and interests of Ireland and its citizens abroad, to work for a world where every human being can live in peace, justice and prosperity, and to foster co-operation and reconciliation on the island of Ireland".

#### **Structures and Location**

The Department fulfils a diverse range of policy (international political, EU, development and Anglo-Irish), programme management (development cooperation, Irish emigrant support, International Fund for Ireland, anti-sectarian and reconciliation funds), public services (passport and consular), promotional (economic, trade and cultural, in co-operation with the relevant State Agencies and other Departments) and administrative functions through its Headquarters staff and network missions abroad. It operates in a complex and changing environment liable to sudden transformation by unexpected events and constantly shaped by factors beyond government control.

The Department is headquartered in Dublin and Limerick. There are 18 Divisions and specialist Units at HQ (as set out in the attached organigram), as well as the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Secretariat in Belfast and the North-South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat in Armagh. Departmental locations in Ireland include Dublin, spread over seven locations in the city, Cork and Limerick, plus a total of 73 diplomatic and consular offices

abroad, called missions. At present, the Department's network of resident diplomatic and consular missions overseas consists of 56 bilateral Embassies, 7 multilateral Missions<sup>1</sup>, 10 Consulates-General and other offices. Many Heads of Mission are also accredited to additional countries on a concurrent basis which enhances the cost-effectiveness of external representation.

The diplomatic network is being further expanded as the eight new missions - five Embassies and three Consulates General - approved by the Government in January this year are established. With the opening of the new missions and other changes to the network in 2014, the Department will manage a total of 80 overseas missions (plus Armagh and Belfast).

In addition, Honorary Consuls provide assistance to Irish citizens in 61 countries.

In Dublin, Iveagh House is the location of the offices of the Minister and Secretary General, Anglo-Irish, Political and Protocol Divisions, the Press and Information Office, the Evaluation & Audit Unit and the Irish Abroad Unit. The Department also has offices in three other buildings in the vicinity of Iveagh House. Europe Division, Strategy and Performance Division and Corporate Services Divisions are in Harcourt Street, while the Dublin offices of Development Cooperation Division are in Hatch Street. Legal Division, Trade and Promotion Division, Asia-Pacific Unit and Latin America Unit are now based in Clonmel Street, just off Harcourt Street. Irish Aid will also operate their schools information office from this location.

Following decentralisation, the main part of Development Cooperation Division relocated to Limerick, which now serves as the Headquarters of Irish Aid, Ireland's development cooperation programme. Consular Division is currently in Molesworth Street, co-located with the main Passport Office location.

The Passport Service is based in Molesworth Street and has public offices there and in Cork. The main processing and passport production facility is in Balbriggan.

### ***Corporate Services Division***

***July 2014***

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<sup>1</sup> To the EU, the UN (New York and Geneva), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg; OECD/UNESCO in Paris; and Partnership for Peace Liaison Office in Brussels.