



# IRELAND

Statement by

Mr Eamon Gilmore, T.D.  
Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

at the

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PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
885 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017 TELEPHONE 212 421-6934 FAX 212 752-4726  
[ireland@un.int](mailto:ireland@un.int)



Mr President

We are living in times of breathtaking change. Much of it is good change. Scientific and technological progress making real advances for humankind; an ever more interconnected world strengthening economic opportunity and developmental potential. The profound transformations which are sweeping through North Africa at present.

But there is also much which is disturbing. Violent conflict in many parts of the world. Growing environmental damage to our planet. The ravages of a global financial and economic crisis. The continuing scourges of poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, terrorism and extremism and a range of other threats to global peace and security.

To respond to these multiple and interrelated challenges, we have one constant anchor: the United Nations. No other organization is as well equipped to develop common answers to the big questions of our time. No other organization has the same global impact and legitimacy. With an increasing need for global solutions, the United Nations, which represents almost all the countries on earth, has the political, moral and legal authority to act. While there may be no easy answers to the questions being posed, our best chance of finding effective responses lies in the collective deliberation and action provided for by this Organization.

Ireland is deeply committed to the United Nations. We look to it to uphold and defend the universal values of peace, security, human rights and development which are set out in the UN Charter.

The Charter tells us that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". The UN is the embodiment of freedom and equality. It is a bulwark defending these core human values in a changing and uncertain world.

Freedom and equality. These are the values which underpin Ireland's response to key global and regional challenges. It is our deep commitment to freedom and equality which places Ireland in the vanguard of international efforts to resolve conflict; to create and maintain peace; to eradicate hunger and under-development; and to put an end to human rights abuses around the world.

## ARAB SPRING

Mr. President,

The values of freedom and equality, and the essential ideals of the Charter, are not just words written down on a page. Since we assembled here twelve months ago, we have seen them expressed in North Africa and the Middle East, in a million acts of

courage and liberation. We have watched the people of the Arab Spring who have asserted their rights and stood up to oppression and corruption. *Tahrir* (freedom) has now passed into all our vocabularies as a byword for all those no longer prepared to see their basic human rights suppressed.

The events of the past nine months in North Africa and the Middle East are historic in their sweep and profound in their implications. These have been genuinely popular movements demanding reform, freedom and equality. The leadership role exercised within them by women has been striking and inspirational.

The people of the Arab Spring have stood up, and stood together, to assert their basic rights and freedoms. The right to choose their own leaders. The right not to live in fear of the knock on the door. The right to live freely and openly. The right to provide a decent life, and a hopeful future, for themselves and their families. They remind us that the human thirst for basic freedoms is unquenchable. They should inspire us in the work we do here.

In rising up to grasp their own destiny, the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are tracing the path of those others, once in the shadow of the Iron Curtain, who, in demanding those ordinary freedoms, created extraordinary history.

The United Nations has, of course, played an indispensable role in supporting these developments. Starting from the key Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, it has led international efforts to support the Libyan people. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the National Transitional Council who took up Libya's seat at the UN this week. I pledge Ireland's full support as they seek to rebuild Libya and to fulfil the democratic aspirations of the Libyan people.

We cannot know the final outcome of the events we are witnessing. We must ensure that the democratic changes underway are consolidated. And that the promise of profound improvements in human rights in the countries concerned, in particular in relation to the role of women, is fully realised.

## SYRIA

However, the situation in Syria continues to arouse the deepest international concern. President Assad and his Government seem oblivious to the demands of the Syrian people for change and to the lessons of the "Arab Spring" elsewhere. They appear determined to respond with further oppression and violence. Our basic message to the Syrian leader is this. No leader who refuses to listen to what his people are saying and to act on their clearly expressed desire for peace and reform, can expect to remain in power.

## MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

Mr. President,

In the Middle East Peace Process, the search for freedom and equality has yet to bear fruit. The Arab-Israeli conflict remains depressingly deadlocked. Unless this deadlock is broken, the opportunities for yet another generation of children will be destroyed.

The situation in the Middle East is urgent. After twenty years of failed initiatives, disillusionment about the capacity of the political process to deliver a settlement is deepening. Young Palestinians, in particular, are frustrated and despairing. The position of the moderate Palestinian leadership is under threat. Never has it been more important to show that politics works and that a peaceful, just and lasting settlement is within reach through negotiation.

Everybody knows what a final and comprehensive settlement would involve: two States, based on 1967 borders with mutually agreed swaps, living side by side in peace and security. It is more pressing than ever before to get direct negotiations underway which would address all the core issues and would culminate in such an agreement within a specified time-frame.

Ireland has long been an advocate for the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state within borders based on those of 1967. We want to see the peoples of Palestine and Israel living as good neighbours in peace, security and prosperity. As soon as possible and this can only come about through negotiation.

Ireland strongly opposes all action which serves to hinder or delay negotiation, such as violent attacks on civilians and their property or Israel's illegal settlement of occupied Palestinian territory.

The decision of President Abbas to seek Palestine's membership of the United Nations is entirely legitimate and understandable. Palestine has the same right to membership of the United Nations as Ireland or any other Member of this Organisation. Some would seek to argue that Palestine cannot be recognised as a State because its borders remain to be agreed. But if the borders of Palestine are still a matter for negotiation, then so, by definition, are those of Israel which is rightly a full member of the UN.

Membership of the UN of itself, however, would not change the unstable and unacceptable situation on the ground. It does not remove the compelling need for negotiations. Nor will it offer a legitimate excuse to avoid negotiations. Whatever happens here at the UN, negotiations must resume as soon as possible. The statement issued last Friday by the Quartet provides a framework for precisely that.

What recognition of Palestinian statehood would do, however, would be to give dignity and support to the Palestinian people who have suffered for too long. It would

also be a tangible demonstration of the commitment of the international community and the UN to an agreed settlement between two sovereign states, living side by side in peace, security and prosperity.

The day will come, not too far off, when the General Assembly will be asked to vote on a proposal to admit Palestine as a member of this Organisation or perhaps, as an interim step towards the achievement of that goal, to accord Palestine non-member observer state status. Provided that the resolution is drafted in terms that are reasonable and balanced, I expect Ireland to give its full support.

In Ireland, we know from our own experience that peace does not come easily. It requires political will and difficult compromises. But we also know the benefits of peace. There can be no doubting the hugely transformative power for the Middle East region of a final end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The international community has invested far too much effort and resources over the past decades not to do all it can now to assist a return to direct talks by the two sides. In the words of Martin Luther King, we cannot ignore "the fierce urgency of now".

I again urge the Government of Israel to halt all settlement expansion. And I also call on them to end the unjust blockade of Gaza by opening up land crossings to normal commercial, human and humanitarian traffic.

## HUNGER/DEVELOPMENT

The search for freedom and equality drives the enormously important work being done by the UN and by its individual Member States in the area of development.

The Millennium Development Goals provide the essential framework for international development efforts up to 2015. As we look beyond 2015, the United Nations must remain central to the fight to end poverty and hunger in the world.

A century and a half ago, the streets around this building where we now meet, and throughout this great city, were thronged with tens of thousands of Irish people who came here as refugees from famine. To this very day, the memory of that time remains with the Irish people.

Hunger remains humankind's greatest enemy. As we meet today in New York, some 12 million people are struggling to find food to keep their families alive in the Horn of Africa. 750,000 are at imminent risk of death from hunger. The immediate cause of this crisis is drought, but its severity is the result of a combination of factors, including conflict, insecurity and persistent underdevelopment. We have a moral obligation to act in the face of such suffering. Ireland is providing over \$67 million to

the Horn of Africa in 2011 and 2012 in direct life saving humanitarian assistance and through measures to enhance food security.

The clear lesson of previous humanitarian emergencies in Africa is that we must address the causes in order to prevent future crises. The need to address the systemic global hunger crisis is, and will remain, central to Ireland's development assistance programme. Our objective is to save lives today and build new futures for communities ravaged by hunger. The Scaling Up Nutrition movement, launched at the United Nations a year ago, makes a clear link between under-nutrition among mothers and babies and the building of healthy, educated and prosperous societies in the future.

We need to act together now to provide long term sustainable solutions, which will decisively break the cycle of food shortages. We believe that a strong focus is essential on building the productivity of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. 80% of them are women and the primary carers of children and providers of food, fuel and water.

We know that climate change is disproportionately affecting their lives and their livelihoods. Their farms and livestock are less productive. Their coping mechanisms are less effective. Over time they are vulnerable to abject poverty and despair. I believe that there is a compelling case for "climate justice" – bringing developmental fairness to bear on the climate change agenda.

The global financial and economic crisis presents major challenges for all of us in our efforts to maintain solidarity with developing countries. Aid budgets are under significant pressure. But we will not turn our backs on the world's poorest. In Ireland, despite the economic difficulties we are facing, and because we recognise our moral obligation and our interests, values and principles as a member of the international community, development will remain at the heart of our foreign policy. We remain committed to the UN target of providing 0.7% of GNP to Official Development Assistance. We will continue to work to achieve the target.

## PEACEKEEPING / HUMAN RIGHTS / DISARMAMENT / CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Mr President

As Ireland will sustain its ODA effort, we will also maintain our longstanding engagement across critical areas of UN work:

- We remain strongly supportive of the UN's vital role in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Recently a 440-strong battalion of peacekeepers from the Irish Defence Forces has returned to serve with UNIFIL in Lebanon, the first country to which we deployed peace-keepers over half a century ago.

- A deep attachment to the values of freedom and equality and other core human rights principles underpins our candidature for election to the Human Rights Council at the elections to be held in 2012. If elected, we look forward to making a strong contribution to the work of enhancing the Council's performance and promoting respect for human rights worldwide.
- We will continue to push for the UN's disarmament machinery to become more responsive to 21st century imperatives. Key challenges for the year ahead include implementation of the agreements reached at last year's Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, as well as negotiation of a robust Arms Trade Treaty. We will maintain a strong focus on implementation and universalisation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, adopted in Dublin three years ago.

Regional organisations have always been vital partners for the UN in the areas of peace, security and conflict resolution. Next year Ireland will chair the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We look forward to making our contribution to the resolution of the so-called "protracted conflicts" within the OSCE region. Our OSCE Chairmanship will be a practical demonstration of Ireland's strong commitment to multilateralism and will draw on our own national experience of conflict resolution.

## CONCLUSION

Mr President

Over the past week, this Assembly has heard of a formidable array of challenges facing the world.

Peace and security, human rights, the elimination of hunger: these are among the great moral imperatives of our time. Underlying each of these is the need to assert the freedom and equality of all human beings. Now more than ever, the UN is demonstrating that it is the home for these fundamental values and goals and the arena in which we can best pursue collective solutions.

Ireland will play its full part in the search for these solutions. Whether it is to bring peace to parts of the world ravaged by conflict, relief to those threatened by famine and starvation or protection to those afflicted by human rights abuses, we will make our contribution. And we will stand up, in this Assembly and elsewhere, for fairness, for justice, for freedom and for equality, in the conduct of international relations.

Thank you.