

**Ireland's National Statement**

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**for**

**Humanitarian Affairs Segment of ECOSOC**

**United Nations**

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This ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment takes place at a moment of unprecedented challenge for the global humanitarian situation.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was facing record levels of humanitarian need. The pandemic, and the associated global shut-down, risks exacerbating these crises, damaging economies and livelihoods, pushing millions more people into vulnerable situations including through food insecurity and heightened risk of sexual based violence, and potentially increasing instability.

Faced with a global crisis of this scale and complexity, it is vital that we come together as a united global community to respond. Effective multilateralism is essential. Ireland fully supports the World Health Organisation's role in leading a coordinated global health response, and we commend UN-OCHA's focus on ensuring the most vulnerable receive the humanitarian assistance they so desperately need. We thank all humanitarian organisations for the extraordinary work carried out by their staff around the world, operating in some of the most challenging environments.

I'd like to remember and pay tribute in particular today to the humanitarian and health workers who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and given their lives in serving others.

Ireland will continue to support you in your efforts. Ireland has already committed over €17 million in direct funding to the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan. This is just part of over €100 million in broader humanitarian funding provided to date in 2020.

We are firmly committed to the Grand Bargain, and believe that the principles of fast, flexible, unearmarked funding, and the need for responses to be locally led and driven, are more important now than ever. The majority of Ireland's humanitarian funding is unearmarked, allowing our partners to respond flexibly wherever needs are greatest. In particular, we commend the funding dexterity demonstrated by the Central Emergency Response Fund, and OCHA's Pooled Funds - their contribution has been rapid, targeted and responsive to critical gaps and needs.

As governments, we must also do everything in our power to facilitate the work of humanitarian actors. We condemn all attempts to constrain or restrict the work of humanitarians, and demand full accountability for any attacks on humanitarian workers. We must do our utmost to ensure that the safety and security of humanitarian personnel is upheld so that they can deliver their life-saving work without fear of being deliberately targeted.

We must also avoid any inadvertent restrictions on humanitarian work. While virtually all countries have introduced movement restrictions as a result of the COVID-19, we need to ensure that humanitarian and health workers have clear exemptions which allow them to respond where their help is most needed.

As well as dealing with the immediate implications of COVID-19 we should not lose sight of the wider drivers of humanitarian suffering, above all conflict. In particular, we regret the fact that we are witnessing conflicts becoming more protracted, more fragmented, and more urbanised, increasingly putting civilians at risk.

Should Ireland be elected to the Security Council in 2021-22, we will seek to do all we can to address the root causes of conflict so as to help prevent humanitarian need, acting as a tireless advocate and champion of peace.

We fully support the call of the UN Secretary General for a global ceasefire, and welcome the steps that have been taken in a number of contexts towards peace. In too many other contexts however, violence has continued or grown worse, with devastating impacts on communities. We call on all actors involved in violence to put aside their weapons, and join the common fight against COVID-19.

One feature of these conflicts that we are particularly concerned about is the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, with devastating impacts on civilians. That is why Ireland is among those leading international efforts in Geneva to address the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Ireland will continue to support peacebuilding efforts. Ireland has a proud record of continuous provision of peacekeepers since we joined the UN in 1958. We welcome the strong ‘culture of protection’ that has become embedded in peacekeeping operations. However, we must continue to ensure our commitments on the protection of civilians are fully implemented.

At this moment when the world is facing the triple crisis of Covid-19 – health, economic and social – we need our United Nations to be at its most effective. A collective, united global response is vital, in order to reduce and mitigate the humanitarian consequences of this crisis.