

**Social  
Democrats**

# Foreign Affairs

Ireland's Place in Today's World

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## Introduction

Since the foundation of the state Ireland has always engaged in a positive and committed manner in global affairs. Our interaction with the nations of the world in an era of increasing globalisation is a critical element in sustaining Ireland's security, and in contributing to our economic growth and the prosperity for our people.

We will promote abroad our values of an inclusive, fair and just society with dignity, respect and equality for all citizens, which defines who we are as both a nation and a people.

A culture that promotes human rights and respect for international law is strongly embedded in Ireland. Through our participation in European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) institutions the Social Democrats are committed to supporting diplomatic efforts **towards peaceful and durable solutions to conflict** in accordance with international law, as well as advocating and participating in **the global struggle against hunger, famine and extreme poverty**.

Where viable **the Social Democrats will also support UN and EU peacekeeping operations** to help mitigate the worst effects of conflict on local civilian populations.

Much of the instability in today's world is propelled by the rapid onset of climate change, widespread hunger, food and water security, poverty, disease and emerging international security and hybrid threats emanating from state and non-state actors.

Ireland must work with the international community to ensure preparedness and resilience to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented today and to those over the horizon and not yet visible in a rapidly changing and evolving new world order.

We must ensure to strike the correct balance in our national and international policies, and in the context of our international engagement work, to safeguard Ireland's national security, economic interests, and social and cultural values.

## The European Union

Ireland's road to Europe began in May 1972 when 83 per cent of the Irish electorate voted in favor of joining the European Communities, or what we know today as the European Union (EU). European Union membership still enjoys the overwhelming support of the Irish population.

EU membership has helped transform Ireland into a modern and progressive society, and the areas of Irish life – whether economic, social, cultural or political – that have been advanced by EU membership are many. They include how we work, our ability to travel easily for work or education opportunities, issues of social and economic equality, and environment protection.

**The Social Democrats are fully committed to keeping Ireland in its rightful place at the center of the European family.**

- We believe EU membership and shared European values are central to our national interests and provide Ireland with a platform to actively promote our foreign policy objectives within a European block of friendly nations.
- We will strive to ensure that the European Union promotes Ireland's cultural and social values, national interests, as far as is possible.
- We will endeavour, through the processes and institutions of the EU, to deepen cooperation among member states in the pursuit of peace, prosperity, social justice, and well-being for all EU citizens.
- We will work within the EU framework to promote fundamental human rights, democratic values and institutions, and the rule of law.
- Transparency and accountability are fundamental values to the Social Democrats and we will work to enhance these values where necessary across EU institutions, agencies and bodies.
- We support the creation EU strategic partnerships outside Europe for the management of common objectives, including food security, energy security, human rights, and migration.

## The United Nations

Since joining the United Nations (UN) in 1955, Ireland's diplomats, humanitarian workers, police and military personnel have brought stability and peace to unstable areas of the world and have been among the world leaders in maintaining peace in some of the most insecure regions around the globe.

Ireland is justly proud of our tradition of participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, and membership for Ireland continues to be a key component of Irish foreign policy.

The Social Democrats believe Ireland should continue to play its key role as a member of UN in the context of promoting peace, human rights, rule of law, social justice, hunger reduction, dignity and the primacy of diplomacy to resolve conflict.

- We will commit to support the vital work of the United Nations across the vectors of war and conflict, gender-based violence, human equality, minority rights, clean water, global health, shelter, food and energy security.
- We will leverage our position to promote partnership and proficiency in mitigating the causes of climate change.
- We will promote and actively support UN initiatives to grow the social democracy and justice ethos for equality of opportunity, human rights, dignity and a peaceful existence for all people.
- Actively support the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

## The OSCE

Ireland is a founding member of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, subsequently the **Organization for Security and Co-operation**. The OSCE deals with issues surrounding arms control, preventive diplomacy, confidence and security building measures, election monitoring, human rights, economic and environmental security. Organisations such as The OSCE and Council of Europe help spread and secure values such as democracy, peace and security for all. Through Ireland's membership, universal human rights have been developed, spread across member states and beyond. The Social Democrats see value in Ireland's continued membership.

## Palestine

The Social Democrats will work closely with international institutions including the EU, UN and others to enhance humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine and help accelerate a peaceful and enduring resolution to the conflict between Israeli and the Palestinian people.

The Social Democrats utterly repudiate all violence from state and non-state actors directed against the civilian populations of both Israel and Palestine.

We unequivocally condemn Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

In government the Social Democrats will:

- Seek the recognition of a Palestinian state, and promote efforts to achieve a two-state solution on the basis of 1967 borders. We believe the two-state solution offers the only prospect of an enduring peace.
- Support the creation of a shared capital for the two states in Jerusalem, and the ending of the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands.
- Seek to enact the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018 and the Illegal Israeli Settlements Divestment Bill 2023.
- Call out publicly the State of Israel's "apartheid" being exacted on the Palestinian population daily.
- Seek referrals to the International Criminal Court where there is prima facie evidence of breaches of international law.
- Advocate for the suspension of the EU trade deal with Israel until the Israeli government complies with international law.

## Ukraine

The illegal invasion of Ukraine is the largest attack on a sovereign state in Europe since the end of World War II. The Russian Federation, by its actions, has unhinged the geopolitical and security landscape, potentially for decades, and presaged a new world order where the crime of state aggression replaces a generally accepted rules-based order, underpinned by international law.

The Social Democrats unreservedly condemn the illegal invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and are committed to:

- Sustaining efforts to ensure accountability for war crimes committed against the people of Ukraine.
- Supporting the supply of non-lethal aid to Ukraine and providing humanitarian assistance to its citizens relocated to Ireland.
- Recognising the territorial integrity of Ukraine as being within the borders identified by international law.
- Supporting the principles of the United Nations Charter to help find a diplomatic solution and enable a lasting peace for the region.

## Global Conflict

The Social Democrats are acutely aware of the spread of global conflict.

Conflict in Syria, Yemen, Libya, Western Sahara, Sahel, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan among many other places brings the usual litany of human rights violations, internal displacement and the movement of vast numbers of the affected populations across international borders, seeking safety and humanitarian assistance.

The Social Democrats will seek to leverage Ireland's history of non-colonialism, our international reputation in peace keeping, and military neutrality, in exhorting the primacy of diplomacy to prevent conflict, and will work to promote the UN Charter as the catalyst for the settlement of international disputes, tackling the root causes of the conflict.

## Irish Neutrality

While Ireland's definition of neutrality is not formally described in law, it can be argued that it has been determined through precedent.

**The Social Democrats believe Ireland should maintain our current form of neutrality**, which can be described as politically aligned, but non-membership of military alliances or mutual defence arrangements.

Ireland's neutrality is a positive position and does not represent international political indifference. It allows us to play a role as neutral arbitrators where appropriate. **Any move to change that puts us more in danger.**

Our neutrality informs our active approach to peace-support operations and crisis management, to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and more. It enables more effective engagement to promote peace, including via the UN.

Crucially, neutrality means being able to defend and monitor one's own territory. A major rethink in defence and security policy, along with increased investment in the Defence Forces to allow it to do its job, is necessary.

The Social Democrats are committed to:

- Retaining Ireland's long established policy of military neutrality (non-alignment) as a key element in our Foreign Policy and in line with the current wishes of the majority of the Irish people.
- Vocal political opposition to the crime of military aggression, violations of Human Rights, or International Human Rights Law from whatever source.
- Ensuring Ireland is not used as a hub by State or Non-State actors for the passage of military equipment such as weapons, explosive equipment, ammunition etc. into war zones or regions of conflict. A pro-active inspection system to avoid abuse of landing rights at Irish airports is required.
- Requiring all military aircraft requesting overflight of Irish airspace to be compatible with our policy of military neutrality.
- Opposing Irish membership of NATO.
- Ensuring that any decision representing a major change to our current form of neutrality be tested first via a Citizens' Assembly and possibly by referendum.
- Increasing funding the Irish Defence forces to allow it to defend and monitor our national territory in a manner commensurate with our international obligations.



## The Diaspora

The Social Democrats recognise the importance of the Irish Diaspora and concur with President Michael D Higgins when he said:

‘Our diaspora is one of Ireland’s greatest resources: through the contribution our people make to the nations they migrate to; through the bonds they forge with the peoples of those countries, our migrants have allowed Ireland to have global connections far beyond our size’.

Supporting and consolidating our relationship with the Irish Diaspora spread across the world is something close to the hearts of the Social Democrats. We are committed to growing that relationship and enhancing supports for Irish people living abroad who desire to return home.

## Our Neighbour, Britain

Britain is our closest neighbour and one with which we enjoy a strong connection across a broad range of areas including culture, trade, tourism, a common travel area, the supply of services, and investment opportunities. There is also a significant Irish diaspora permanently residing and working there.

The Social Democrats are committed to maintaining, and where opportunity presents enhancing, our strong bond with the people of Britain. A close political relationship built on mutual respect and collaboration will facilitate the continued growth of prosperity and reciprocal friendship for both our people and our countries.

## Climate Change

Climate Change is a fundamental issue facing Ireland and the rest of the world and one of the greatest challenges of our time. The actions we take, or fail to take, now will affect our country and our planet for generations.

The Social Democrats **appreciate the global dimension to mitigating the effects of climate change** and preventing further environmental damage. We will promote our environmental principles and concerns, as set out in our Environmental, Climate, Nature and Biodiversity policies, outside Ireland through diplomatic channels and via other available avenues of approach as opportunity allows.

The Social Democrats are committed to:

- Promoting adherence to the Paris Climate Agreement and other environmental protections within European institutions.
- Supporting the work of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- Reaching the European Commission's current proposals, to more than halve our CO2 emissions by 2030.
- Collaborating with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on climate change issues compatible with our national objectives.
- Promoting the development of both new and emerging technologies that can help mitigate the effects of climate change and act as enablers in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Supporting Ireland's Embassies and Consulates to act as role models for our environmental principles.

## Irish Aid

**The Social Democrats believe fighting global poverty and hunger should be integral component to Ireland's foreign policy.** The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and pledge to reach 'the furthest behind first' can, we believe, help provide the leadership to reduce global hunger and poverty.

The Social Democrats are committed to:

- Reaching the UN target of allocating 0.7 per cent of national income to official development assistance (ODA) not later than 2030.
- Maintaining the poverty-focused, untied, and fully grant-based nature of Irish development aid.
- Continuing Ireland tradition of targeting humanitarian aid in all its formats towards the worlds most deprived and poorest regions.
- Scale-up humanitarian funding to conflict-affected and fragile states, directing funding that contributes to removing the root causes of crises.
- Ensuring that Ireland's domestic response to the Ukraine crisis is additional to current (and future) ODA spending and not diverted from funding for on-going humanitarian crises.
- Acknowledging that Ireland's commitment under Agenda 2030 to reach 0.7 per cent of national income by 2030 is separate and distinct from the Climate Finance commitments made in the Paris Agreement in 2015.
- Supporting the pledge of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reach 'the furthest behind first' as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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