15 April 2013

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have just under a thousand days to go before our deadline to meet the MDGs expires. Despite impressive progress so far, much remains to be done. So it’s time for us to scale up our efforts and fulfil our promises.

Every night more than 870 million people go to bed hungry. Undernutrition – the worst form of poverty – kills more than 2 million children every year. And 165 million children in the world today are suffering from stunting and its lifelong consequences.

We know that the world has the means and the technical solutions to remedy it. So I am grateful to Eamon Gilmore and Mary Robinson for inviting me to join you for this conference. It is a welcome initiative reflecting Ireland’s commitment to place the critical global challenges of hunger, nutrition and climate justice at the very top of the development agenda.

EU initial position on the post-2015 framework

In the last 12 years 600 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. The MDGs deserve some of the credit for this – the greatest ever achievement in poverty reduction. They have been instrumental in setting priorities and rallying unprecedented support for poverty eradication.

Now we need to design an ambitious post-2015 framework that uses the MDGs as a springboard towards making extreme poverty a thing of the past.

The UN High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda – on which I serve alongside eminent people such as Ambassador Espinosa, who is here this morning – is leading the global debate on the future post-MDG framework.

As an initial contribution to that debate, the Commission has recently put forward its policy proposal, called “A Decent Life for All: ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future”. With poverty eradication at its core, it is global in aspiration but understands that national targets and commitments will be involved.

Hunger and nutrition in the post-MDG framework

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our post-2015 framework must build on the MDGs’ successes, but also address their shortcomings.
This is as true for nutrition as for any other development challenge. Last month I saw the great progress Burundi and Malawi have made in increasing food production and reducing hunger. However, nutrition has been neglected. More than 50% of children under 5 are stunted. The current MDG framework has failed to capture this hidden tragedy sufficiently.

We must redress this situation and ensure a real focus on hunger and nutrition in the future framework.

We still don’t know how this framework will be put together; how it will be structured in terms of goals and targets.

However, for me it is clear that food and nutrition security are clearly one of those to be taken forward and addressed comprehensively and seriously in the post-MDG agenda. There is currently a debate on the way to handle these issues in the next framework. Some voices, following the Rio+20’s discussions, call for making food security and nutrition a goal in itself. Others propose to mainstream these issues as targets in different stand alone goals, such as “end extreme poverty”. The good news is that food and nutrition security feature highly in the political debate.

As the world’s largest grant donor and number one donor in the area of food security, the EU has already paved the way in that respect, by adopting a new policy framework on nutrition, with specific targets on stunting reduction.

Climate action

We are leading by example in fighting climate change, too. We have made our development aid more climate-compatible and we support specific climate-related actions. I would mention just two examples. The first is the Global Climate Change Alliance, which offers a platform for dialogue and a source of technical and financial support to over 35 countries most vulnerable to climate change. By the end of 2013 the GCCA will have earmarked 285 million euro to implement over 45 programmes, supporting adaptation in climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, coastal zone protection and land and water management.

The second example is the Sustainable Energy For All technical assistance facility which, in addition to tackling climate change through energy efficiency, will promote rural electricity – which should also benefit the agriculture sector.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must now keep setting our sights higher. We have unique opportunity to move forward quickly towards a new and more ambitious post-2015 framework in which our commitment to combating hunger, malnutrition and undernutrition are clearly stated – thanks in no small measure to the tireless work of Member States such as Ireland to bring food and nutrition security under the international spotlight.

The Commission is committed to helping shape a post-2015 framework that can rid our world of poverty and hunger for good.

Thank you.