An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar

Department of the Taoiseach

Merrion St. Upper

Dublin 2

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Simon Coveney

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Iveagh House

80 St Stephen’s Green

Dublin 2 25/5/2020

 **Re: Covid-19 National Responses and International Solidarity**

Dear Taoiseach, Dear Tánaiste,

We write to express our solidarity with communities globally suffering the burdens and devastation of COVID-19. We urge continued and reinforced Irish Government and Irish Aid and overall, Irish political support for alleviation of their immediate situation and for ongoing essential sustainable development interventions.

As groups working with a broad range of marginalised communities in Ireland, we are conscious of the need to seek to mitigate the differential impact of the virus on marginalised, minority and vulnerable groups here. It is clear to us that this vulnerability may be multiplied in the global south and could have devastating immediate effects for the poorest in those regions as well as long term consequences for their development.

We are conscious of the need globally as well as nationally for Ireland to seek to ensure that all measures to deal with COVID-19 meet international human rights standards requirements and that human rights abuses, including by state officials, military, police and security personnel are named and addressed. We are also conscious of the particular COVID-19 related vulnerabilities for women, disabled people, older people and marginalised and minority groups including those without clear status at this time and as is being reflected globally in increased reports of violence against women, gender violence, security personnel abuses and setting aside of migrants and refugee rights.

We acknowledge Ireland’s ongoing contribution to development globally and to international human rights. In particular we note and support the recent increased contribution to the World Health Organisation. We are of course also aware of Ireland’s candidacy in the upcoming UN Security Council elections.

The EU arena is also one where Ireland’s COVID-19 related voice and contributions to ensure human rights and equality, and humanitarian responses for EU citizens, residents and those seeking to reach Europe’s shores is essential. We are alarmed too, by graphic images and reports of abuses of migrant and minority rights.

We therefore ask that the Irish Government:

1. Seeks to grow our Official Development Assistance commitments in the medium term and at a minimum immediately commit to maintaining current levels and implementation of the Better World policy;
2. In recognising the importance of COVID-19 community responses here and globally, ensure that such responses are directly supported globally in Ireland’s ODA Programme;
3. Plays a substantial and reinforced role in the promotion and protection of human rights globally in the ongoing COVID and post COVID periods including through seeking enhanced protection of civil society space and human rights defenders and reinforced engagement with the ILO and international worker protection mechanisms;
4. Plays a substantial and reinforced role in the promotion of the rights of women and girls including through the Women Peace and Security framework and in addressing the internationally recognised global differential impact of the Covid-19 crisis on women and girls including on their reproductive health and rights;
5. Ensures that the Sustainable Development Goals are respected and implemented, including Goal 1 focusing on leaving no one behind in Covid and post Covid resource allocation at home and abroad;
6. Acknowledges the climate justice questions and opportunities which the Covid crisis can present and ensures that on-going responses including those supported by Ireland’s ODA reinforce Paris Climate Agreement commitments and advance climate justice globally and at home;
7. Plays a leadership role in ensuring that all EU provisions and policies including those pertaining to COVID-19 are human right compliant and duly acknowledge gender and other differentials and in particular that the rights of migrants and refugees are promoted and realized;
8. Ensures that all such international interventions are fully reflected in national actions and Government initiatives.

Finally, we take this opportunity to wish you well with your continued and crucial work at this time of crisis and with the final weeks of the Security Council campaign.

Is linn,