

**Social
Democrats**

Positive Neutrality

A Basis for Social Democratic Foreign Policy

For the Future
It Starts Here

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Key Points

In Government, the Social Democrats will:

- Retain Ireland's long established policy of military neutrality as a key element in our Foreign Policy.
- Ensure that any major change to our current form of neutrality be tested first via a Citizens' Assembly and possibly by referendum.
- Ensure 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.
- Increase funding to the Irish Defence forces to allow it to defend and monitor our national territory commensurate with our international obligations.
- Support the vital work of the United Nations around war and conflict, gender-based violence, human equality, minority rights, clean water, global health, shelter, and food and energy security.
- Actively promote our foreign policy objectives within a European bloc of friendly nations.
- We will enact the Occupied Territories Bill and the Illegal Israeli Settlements Bill, and impose diplomatic and travel sanctions on Israeli government officials and violent settlers while advocating at EU level for further and more widespread sanctions.
- 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.
- Promote adherence to the Paris Climate Agreement and other environmental protections within European institutions.
- Reach the UN target of allocating 0.7 per cent of national income to official development assistance (ODA) by 2030.
- Maintain the poverty-focused, untied, and fully grant-based nature of Irish development aid, and continuing Ireland's tradition of targeting humanitarian aid towards the world's most deprived and poorest regions.

Introduction

Since the foundation of the state Ireland has always engaged in a positive and committed manner in global affairs while remaining proudly militarily neutral.

This neutrality is a platform on which our relatively unique position in the world has been built and is a source of strength and legitimacy. It has helped us build an internationally respected reputation in peacekeeping, in international aid, and in promoting the development and rights of other post-colonial countries.

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 the safety and prosperity for our people.

Many of the domestic issues we currently face have their roots abroad, and therefore must be addressed through our foreign policy, including by **promoting and upholding the values of an inclusive, fair, and just society with dignity, respect, and equality for all**; values which define 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**.

The Social Democrats will also support UN and EU peacekeeping operations to help mitigate the worst effects of conflict on local civilian populations and will seek to provide aid to alleviate hunger, famine, and extreme poverty. As a country, we need to "wage peace" by working with the UN, EU and other international institutions to resolve conflicts that incur incalculable human cost and drive people to flee their homes.

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. Combatting climate change globally is the only way to prevent extreme weather events that already impact us locally.

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 world order.

We must 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.

By addressing these issues collaboratively and at their source, we can create a more stable and prosperous society for everyone.

Irish Neutrality

While Ireland's definition of neutrality is not formally described in Irish law, it has been well-established through precedent and is recognised in EU Treaties, while public support for the continuation of this policy remains strong. **The Social Democrats believe Ireland should maintain our current form of neutrality**, which can be described as non-membership of military alliances or mutual defence arrangements, while allowing for political alignment and the provisions of non-lethal aid and humanitarian assistance.

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

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.
- Ensuring that any major change to our current form of neutrality be tested first via a Citizens' Assembly and possibly by referendum. This includes any changes to the so-called 'Triple Lock'.
- Vocal political opposition to the crime of military aggression, and 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.
- Opposing attempts to transfer decisionmaking powers on defence to the EU.
- Increasing funding of the Irish Defence forces to allow them to defend and monitor our national territory commensurate with our international obligations.

National Defence and Security

Crucially, **military neutrality means being able to defend and monitor one's own territory**. This needs to be reflected in national defence and security policy, and an increased investment in the Defence Forces is necessary so it can do its job.

Since the foundation of the modern Irish State in 1922, the Irish Defence Forces have worked to secure our national territory, and conducted mandated peacekeeping missions abroad; a contribution of which we are rightly proud as a nation.

The government departments tasked with Ireland's defence **must be adequately resourced**. The Defence Forces, as the primary state organisation tasked with defence in Ireland, **must be given the funding necessary** to accommodate and pay its personnel, train units, and meet the challenges of today and the future, wherever they are deployed.

It is also important that national defence and security policy reflect a state's core values. To meet the commitments and challenges of the 21st century Ireland must:

- Take a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to national defence and security.
- Develop a new National Defence and Security Framework.
- Invest in the Defence Forces with the goal of bringing funding to a sustainable level that would allow it to fulfil the tasks assigned to it.

In Government, the Social Democrats will

- Increase funding to the Irish Defence forces to allow it to defend and monitor our national territory commensurate with our international obligations.
- Address the pay issues faced by Defence Forces personnel that are inhibiting goals around recruitment and retention.

Compared to countries with a similar standard of living, Irish enlisted personnel receive disproportionately low pay. Current enlisted pay, especially at entry level, does not make for a sustainable career. A full review

of pay conditions in the PDF, RDF and civilian employees with a view to adjusting to international best practice is required.

- Reconfigure the Department of Defence as the Department of Defence, Security and Emergency Planning.
- Develop a new National Defence and Security Framework.
- Create an Office of National Information, Cyber and Data Defence and Security to coordinate many of the functions of the various bodies currently responsible for Ireland's data, information, and cybersecurity.
- Set, as a minimum, a PDF establishment of 11,500 (plus 500 in training) with an increase to Naval Service and Air Corps strength to a level that would allow each to function as required by Ireland's security requirements.
- Equip the Defence Forces with the systems and technologies required to effectively carry out their roles in the 21st century, including SONAR and Air Surveillance Radar.

Our Place Within International Bodies

Since joining the United Nations (UN) in 1955, Ireland's diplomats, humanitarian workers, police and military personnel have helped bring 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 continues to be a key component of Irish foreign policy.

European Union (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 environmental protection.

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

In Government, the Social Democrats will:

- Commit to supporting the vital work of the United Nations around war and conflict, gender-based violence, human equality, minority rights, clean water, global health, shelter, and food and energy security.
- Actively promote our foreign policy objectives within a European bloc of friendly nations. We believe EU membership and shared European values are central to our national interests and provide Ireland with a platform to promote those values abroad.
- Leverage our position to promote partnership and proficiency in mitigating the causes of climate change.
- 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.
- 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.
- Advocate for the reform of the UN Security Council to feature a more diverse representation, including amongst permanent members.
- Work within the EU framework to promote fundamental human rights, democratic values and institutions, and the rule of law.
- Support the creation of EU strategic partnerships outside Europe for the management of common objectives, including food security, energy security, and migration, but *only* where human rights are being upheld.
- Advocate for EU-funded Search & Rescue Missions in the Mediterranean, and a strengthened humanitarian mandate for Frontex.

The EU should have an explicit goal to save lives in the Mediterranean.

Advocating for a Safer, Fairer World

The Social Democrats, in government, will seek to leverage Ireland's history of non-colonialism, our international reputation in peace keeping, and our 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

We 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. We will seek the further recognition of a Palestinian state among our international allies, 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.

As part of our solidarity with the Palestinian people, we will dedicate €10m to fund and facilitate grassroots community initiatives to bring Palestinian children and young people to Ireland for education, cultural exchange, and/or specific medical treatments. As part of this same scheme funding, we will create an exchange programme for Palestinian public servants to be mentored in Ireland as part of a Palestinian state-building initiative, including sponsored attendance at the Institute of Public Administration.

We will enact the Occupied Territories Bill and the Illegal Israeli Settlements Bill, and impose diplomatic and travel sanctions on Israeli government officials and violent settlers while advocating at EU level for further and more widespread sanctions.

We 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, and supporting the supply of non-lethal aid to Ukraine.

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 Climate, Nature and Biodiversity policies – outside Ireland through diplomatic channels and via other available avenues as opportunity allows.

We also believe **fighting global poverty and hunger should be an integral component to Ireland’s foreign policy**. Through implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a pledge to reach ‘the furthest behind first’ we can help provide the leadership to reduce global hunger and poverty.

The Social Democrats are committed to:

- Promoting adherence to the Paris Climate Agreement and other environmental protections within European institutions.
- Reaching the UN target of allocating 0.7 per cent of national income to official development assistance (ODA) by 2030.
- 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 work of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- Collaborating with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on climate change issues compatible with our national objectives.
- Maintaining the poverty-focused, untied, and fully grant-based nature of Irish development aid, and continuing Ireland tradition of targeting humanitarian aid towards the worlds most deprived and poorest regions.
- Scaling-up humanitarian funding to conflict-affected and fragile states, directing funding that contributes to removing the root causes of crises.
- 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.
- Ensuring that Ireland’s international development policy and foreign policy more generally has a focus on women’s rights.
- Supporting the development of a new UN-based (as opposed to IMF-based) debt workout mechanism. Excessive debt burdens impede the pursuit of more sustainable economic and environmental models in poorer and developing countries.

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