



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Dóchas members head to UN Summit on Refugees and Migration: New York 19th September 2016

What is it all about?

On **19 September** the UN General Assembly will host a [high-level summit](#) to address large movements of refugees and migrants, with the aim of bringing countries together behind a more humane and coordinated approach. Representatives from over 190 UN member states are expected to attend.

This is the first time the General Assembly has called for a summit at the Heads of State and Government level on large movements of refugees and migrants so it is an historic opportunity to come up with a blueprint for a better international response. It claims to be a watershed moment to strengthen governance of international migration and a unique opportunity for creating a more responsible, predictable system for responding to large movements of refugees and migrants.

Ireland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. David Donoghue, has played a key role, alongside Jordan, in facilitating negotiations over the last number of months, the fruition of which is the ['New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants'](#) which has been accepted as a UNGA resolution.

The Irish Delegation to the summit will be led by Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald, and includes Minister for Diaspora and International Development, Joe McHugh T.D, and Michael Gaffey, Director-General of Irish Aid. At the summit itself, the Tánaiste is expected to make a national statement.

She will also attend President Obama's Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis on the following day, 20 September. Up to 40 states are expected to pledge significant resources with regard to the global refugee crisis.

Civil society's involvement and key messages

Over the past number of months, a self organised civil society [Action Committee](#) in New York have been working together to influence the outcome of the declaration and have provided inputs and revised language as each draft became available, including influencing the text on contentious issues such as child detention.

The Action Committee have this week released [a statement and scorecard](#) to evaluate the declaration, and feel that despite the good will of some, the declaration sets out uneven commitments and lacks urgency.

The committee have warned that in order to truly make a difference for the lives of refugees and migrants, states must commit to take **seven** immediate actions focusing on protection, safe passage, solidarity, inclusion, decent work and livelihoods, and the societies that host them.

Civil society concerns are also growing that the modalities for the implementation of the principles in the declaration are unknown and it may take until 2018 for key decisions to be made. Civil society has been very clear that refugees and migrants simply cannot wait and that practical and durable actions are needed now.

Meanwhile the Irish Refugee and Migrant coalition issued a [statement on September 7th](#) calling for Ireland to fulfil its pledges on relocation and resettlement. It argues that the Irish Government pledged to take in 4,000 refugees through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, but only 311

refugees have arrived so far. Much more needs to be done, both in terms of speed and a structured approach, to bringing refugees to Ireland.

Dóchas, together with Jim Clarken from Oxfam, had earlier, on 28 July, briefed the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence (JCFAT) on the issues which generated a lively debate. It was noted by the Chair of the JCFAT that we are seeing the biggest movement of people since World War II. There are over 65 million displaced persons, including 25 million refugees, and almost 40 million internally displaced persons. See the Dóchas' submission [here](#).

Dóchas members active in the Coalition include ActionAid Ireland, Christian Aid, Comhlámh, Oxfam Ireland, Trócaire, and World Vision Ireland. Concern Worldwide is focusing on the issue of internally displaced, as well as working with the Irish Gender Based Violence Consortium to research the impact of conflict and displacement on women. The Irish Red Cross is part of the task force set up by the Government to manage the intake of refugees coming to Ireland.

Dóchas members attending the UN Summit

Oxfam's CEO, Jim Clarken, and World Vision's CEO, Helen Keogh, will be attending the UN summit as part of the official Irish delegation along with Dóchas CEO, Suzanne Keatinge. There will be a short briefing for all members on their return. Concern Worldwide, UNICEF and UN Youth Delegates for Ireland Colm O'Rourke and Samantha O'Brien O'Reilly will also be attending the summit.

Dóchas will be focusing its messaging to the Irish delegation on three core areas:

- Ireland must fulfil pledges made with regard to relocation and resettlement in 2015 – out of its stated commitment of taking up to 4,000 refugees, only 311 have arrived so far. The government needs to prioritise unaccompanied children and to introduce a humanitarian scheme that would allow people living here to bring loved ones to safety in Ireland.
- The Irish government must take immediate action to implement agreements reached in New York and include civil society in Ireland in planning those actions. Civil society welcomes the opportunity to work with the government on this issue through a roundtable which should be convened before December 2016.
- Ireland must continue to hold its proud record of not counting its commitments to taking in refugees within its ODA calculations. It is critical that Ireland continues to seek to provide new additional resources to respond adequately to the needs of refugees, but that this does not eat into existing commitments to its ODA spending.

To learn more about the summit and the issues:

Here are some key resources to learn more:

- Oxfam – [A new deal for refugees and migrants?](#)
- IRIN – [The New York Refugee summits – what to expect](#)
- Refugees Deeply - [Abstract Discussions in the Face of a Deadly Crisis](#)