

Trócaire submission to the Green Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland

31st July 2014

Introduction

Trócaire welcomes the consultation on the Green Paper and hopes that this will be the first of a number of opportunities to engage in this policy process and a critically important national debate.

Trócaire's dual mandate demands that as an organisation we tackle the structural causes of global poverty and injustice. Climate Change poses one of the most serious risks to reducing poverty in the countries where we operate, but despite commitments to emission reduction targets Ireland remains significantly off track for making a transition to a low carbon future. It is in light of this context that Trócaire is engaging in the critical question of Ireland's energy future. We believe the people of Ireland should be given the opportunity to be educated about, to debate and to shape the policy choices in relation to Irish energy policy, including the implications of our energy choices on developing countries, and welcome this consultation as a first step in this debate.

Rather than respond to each of the specific consultation questions, this submission reflects on the parameters of the debate and policy development scenario set out in the Paper, and sets out a number of recommendations.

Sustainability is more than a priority, it is a pre-requisite

Climate change is a game changer and no country is immune to its impacts, and its implications. Trócaire is working every day with some of the poorest women and men in developing countries who are suffering disproportionately as a result of a problem they did little to create. Climate change is already undermining the fight to eradicate global poverty; without a significant step change in the response, it threatens to make this goal impossible. Energy, and energy policy, is a critical sector for making the necessary transformation. Trócaire welcomes the assertion by the former Minister for Energy, Communications and Natural Resources that the need for *transformation* is driving the energy policy agenda.

Ireland's energy policy must reinforce the national climate policy which identifies, as a fundamental national objective, achieving a reduction in CO₂ emissions of at least 80% by 2050 in energy, transport and the built environment. This objective also recognises the likelihood of future obligations, including the European Union objective of an 80-95% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

In order to put us on the pathway to meeting these long-term goals, Energy Policy should set ambitious energy reduction targets every five years from 2020.

Where we get our energy from: central pillars must include adequacy, responsibility and justice

Climate science and international energy analysis is clear that in order to have a reasonable chance (more than 50%) of avoiding overshooting the 2°C goal for limiting further increases in global average surface temperatures, a global carbon budget must be respected. Fossil fuels account for 70% of all GHG emissions from all sectors worldwide. Delivering on the goals of 2°C requires the complete phase out of fossil fuels, and the phase in of 100% renewable energy. Irish Energy Policy

should ensure we keep major fossil fuel reserves in the ground, and support and explore renewable sources and technologies.

Trócaire notes the reference in the Green Paper on the importance of ensuring a fair share in the allocation of efforts. The established principle under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capacity is particularly pertinent in this regard. The EU must increase its ambition and action so that it does its fair share in the global effort based on responsibility and capacity, and Ireland, while the importance of a fair allocation of efforts within the EU is important, this must reflect **responsibility** as well as context. We note in this regard the evidence put forward in the 2012 Sustainable Development Framework, 'Our Common Future', of the disproportionately high level of resource use per capita in Ireland. These global dimensions should be part of the public debate on Irish energy policy.

Finally, in the transformation needed, while safe environmental thresholds must provide the ceiling that must not be breached, equity and justice must be the foundations on which action must be built. The Green Paper explores important ideas about energy citizenship. Climate Change disproportionately affect poor and vulnerable women and men, in all countries and in particular in poor countries. Since the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) has become a legal obligation of all EU member states. Article 208 states that all EU policies must take into consideration development objectives: at best, this means that all EU policies must be in support of developing countries' development needs, or at least not contradict the aim of poverty reduction and eradication. In line with Ireland's Commitments on PCD Trócaire recommends that the Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD) should play a role in the development of the Green paper on energy policy. The Terms of Reference of the IDCD defines its role as a consultative and advisory forum for inter-departmental coherence. In this capacity, the IDCD provides an administrative and institutional support mechanism for promoting PCD across government departments. **Justice**, global and domestic, must be a priority and a guiding principle of energy policy. In this light the import of first generation biofuels must cease in recognition of the devastation that biofuel policies are having on land resources and food growing areas across the developing world and the fact that such biofuels do not result in significantly lower carbon emissions.

Summary recommendations:

- Energy policy must comply with the target of 80% reductions in ghg emissions by 2050 (including the provision that this may reflect a future EU target of 80-95%)
- 5 year energy targets should be set from 2020
- Energy policy should put us on a pathway to phase out of fossil fuels in Ireland and phase in 100% renewable energies
- The import of first generation biofuels should cease
- A national debate on Irish energy policy, including its global dimensions, should be facilitated with public participation events, workshops, consultations etc.
- The Inter-Departmental Committee on Development (IDCD) should be involved in the development of the Green Paper on Energy to ensure policy coherence for development.