

**Minister Martin meets United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,**

**New York**

**8 May 2009**

**Press Release**

Minister Martin met today with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Amongst other issues, they discussed the Middle East, Sudan/Chad, Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Sri Lanka, Burma, Climate Change and UN Reform.

Speaking after the Meeting, the Minister said:

“I was delighted to meet with Secretary-General Ban, to whom I emphasised Ireland’s strong commitment to and support for the UN, which remains a cornerstone of Ireland’s foreign policy.

I assured the Secretary-General that Ireland remains committed to participating in United Nations peacekeeping efforts in Chad, following our heavy involvement in the EUFOR mission. I expressed concern at recent developments in Chad, and at the possibility of further conflict between rebels and Government forces. MINURCAT, and the Irish contingent serving with it, is performing an invaluable role in assisting with temporary evacuation and providing shelter for NGO and humanitarian personnel forced to flee the threat of renewed fighting.

On Sudan, I expressed grave concern about the impact on the living conditions of internally displaced persons arising from the expulsion of humanitarian agencies. I emphasised that ensuring continued humanitarian access is a key priority for Ireland and that the International Criminal Court (ICC) remains a vital tool in the fight against impunity.

On Gaza, I strongly supported the Secretary-General’s setting up of the UN Board of Inquiry, whose report he has shared in summary form with the Security Council. I continue to believe that there is a need for a full and independent investigation of the most serious incidents during the conflict, in order to ensure accountability. The

situation in Gaza itself remains of grave concern and my fear is that we could see a resumption of violence in the absence of any progress with opening the crossings on a sustained basis, or with reconstruction.

I endorsed the Secretary-General's statement at this week's Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that we can not afford to place nuclear disarmament on "the back-burner". His reference to the "apocalyptic threat" of nuclear weapons concentrated minds on the urgency of the task we face, as the PrepCom has adopted the agenda for next year's NPT Review Conference. The new positive atmosphere on nuclear disarmament is in no small part due to President Obama's undertaking to work to strengthen the NPT, and to the recent engagement between the US and Russia on reducing their nuclear arsenals.

I discussed the appalling humanitarian situation in the conflict zone in Sri Lanka with the Secretary-General. I commended the role of UN agencies on the ground, as well as his own efforts and those of his senior officials to address the situation.

I also discussed Climate Change with the Secretary-General and expressed appreciation for his critical leadership on this crucial issue. Ireland agrees on the importance of a successful outcome in Copenhagen next December on a comprehensive global treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol.

Notwithstanding my concerns as to the lack of credibility of the electoral process in Burma, I stressed the need for everything possible to be done to try to make next year's elections inclusive, free and fair. I also stressed that every effort must be made to secure the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

I committed Ireland to maintaining its active engagement in the process of UN Reform and I was very gratified that the Secretary-General acknowledged Ireland's longstanding leadership in this area.

I also commended the Secretary General for the decisive action by him and the UN as well as the World Health Organisation in response to the H1N1 virus.