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## Foreword by Mr. Brendan Howlin, T.D., Minister for the Environment



Sustainable development is one of the most universally endorsed aspirations of our time. It has been defined as development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Continued economic growth is essential to meet people's legitimate ambitions for a better life and to provide the resources for implementing environmental protection measures. But we should not tolerate development that is inefficient, that is excessive in its consumption of natural resources or that unduly pressurises the environment.

The Irish public already strongly support this assessment. In a recent EU commissioned attitude survey, only 9% of Irish people agreed that economic development was more important than environmental protection. The overwhelming majority, some 68%, wanted economic development to be progressed but the environment to be protected at the same time.

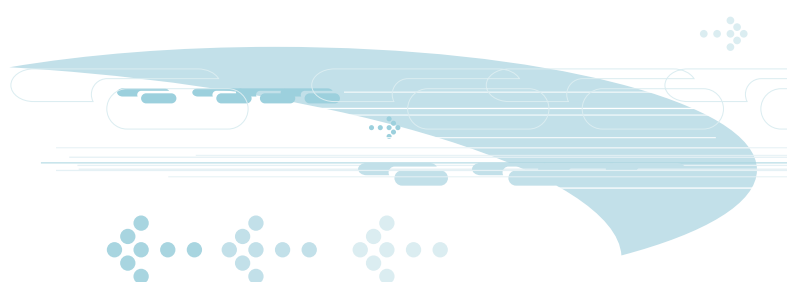
Sustainable development is also about solidarity: solidarity between the present and future generations, between various participants in our society and between different countries.

This National Sustainable Development Strategy is designed to apply considerations of sustainability more systematically to Irish economic policies and to integrate them into associated decision making processes. The EPA's *State of the Environment in Ireland* shows that Ireland's environment, while still generally of a high quality, is affected by a number of adverse trends and serious threats.

There are two ways of responding to these problems. First and immediately, we need where possible to establish specific counter-measures to mitigate adverse environmental effects. Regulation, improved environmental infrastructure and other targeted actions are all important in providing solutions of this kind.

But we must also get the fundamentals right. Environmentally adverse trends can only be radically reversed by having the main economic sectors pull with rather than against the environment.

We must do more with less. We must reduce the intensity of natural resource consumption associated with energy, industrial and agricultural production. We need more efficient and sparing use of transport and of consumer goods. Through changes of this kind, excessive



waste generation and pressures on air, water and soil are headed off at source. This is the meaning of sustainable development.

More sustainable approaches to economic activity will also be assisted by a better valuation and pricing of relevant products and services. The external polluting impact of products and services must be better factored into their costs so that consumers receive the right price signals to inform their market choices.

Sustainable development is not just a constraint on the economy. In the Irish situation, it offers many opportunities to enhance the marketing of key natural resource based industries and to exploit the fast growing world market for environmental goods and services. Adoption of sustainable policies is calculated to increase rather than threaten Irish employment.

This Government Strategy is important in providing a focus for the concept of sustainable development and a plan for its integration into key economic sectors. But achieving sustainable development is a continuing task; that is why the Strategy also puts in place mechanisms for monitoring and review. I intend that these will be actively deployed.

I am satisfied that this new Strategy reflects and takes forward Ireland's commitment to the principles and agenda for sustainable development agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. It responds also to the EU Fifth Action Programme for the Environment, which was reviewed during the Irish Presidency of the European Union and in whose implementation Ireland is actively participating. The Strategy will assist Ireland's participation in the major UN review of *Agenda 21* which will take place at a Special Session of the General Assembly in June 1997.

Brendan Howlin T.D.

Minister for the Environment



## Brollach leis an Aire Comhshaoil

Tá forbairt inmharthana mar cheann de na mianta dár linne lena réitítear go huilíoch. Sainmhíníotar í mar fhorbairt a riarann ar riachtanais na glúine seo gan chumas na nglúnta atá le teacht a gcás féin a riaradh a chur i gcontúirt.

Ní foláir fás eacnamaíochta leanúnach chun uailmhianta dlisteanacha daoine ar saol níos fearr a shásamh, agus chun na hacmhainní a sholáthar chun bearta d'fhonn cosaint na timpeallachta a chur i gcrích. Ach ní chóir dúinn glacadh le forbairt atá neamhéifeachtach, a ídíonn achmainní nádúrtha go hiomarcach, nó a chuireann brú éagorach ar an dtimpeallacht.

Aontaíonn pobal na hÉireann go láidir leis an measúnú seo cheana féin. I suirbhé a iarraidh an CE le déanaí, níor aontaigh ach 9% de phobal na hÉireann go raibh forbairt eacnamaíochta níos tábhachtaí ná cosaint na timpeallachta. Theastaigh ón mórchuid millteanach, 68%, leanacht le forbairt eacnamaíochta ach an timpeallacht a chosaint ag an am céanna.

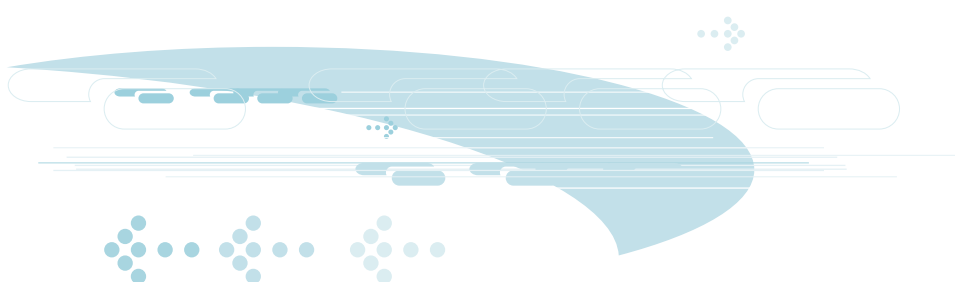
Tá dlúthpháirtíocht mar chuid d'fhorbairt inmharthana freisin: dlúthpháirtíocht idir an ghlúin atá anois ann agus dóibh siúd a bheas ann amach anseo, idir rannpháirtithe éagsúla an sochaí againne, agus idir tíortha éagsúla.

Ceaptar an Stráitéis Forbartha Inmharthana Náisiúnta seo chun cúrsaí cothabhála a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhealach níos struchtúrtha i bpolasaithe eacnamaíochta na hÉireann, agus chun iad a thabhairt isteach sna bproiséis cinnteoireachta a bhfuil bainteach leo. Taispeánann an Tuairisc ar Staid an Chomhshaoil (An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil, 1996) go gcuireann treonna naimhdeacha agus bagartha chinniúnacha isteach ar timpeallacht na hÉireann, cé go bhfuil ard-chineál ar an dtimpeallacht sin go ginéarála.

Is féidir diriú ar na fadhbanna seo i ndá shlí. I dtús báire, ní mór dúinn, áit ar féidir, frithbheartanna faoi leith a bhunú chun toraidh naimhdeacha comhshaoil a laghdú. Tá rialachán, infrastructúr feabhsaithe comhshaoil, agus gníomhaithe le cuspóirí eile go léir tábhachtach chun teacht ar réitigh den chineál seo.

Ach ní mór dúinn na bunphrionsabail cearta a aimsiú chomh maith. Ní féidir treonna naimhdeacha comhshaoil a aisiompú go fréamhaí gan na príomh-earnálacha eacnamaíochta a bheith ag obair ar son na timpeallachta, in áit ina coinne.

Caithfimid breis a dhéanamh le níos lú. Caithfimid tréine ídiú achmhainní nádúrtha, atá comhcheangailte le fuinnimh, táirgeadh tionsclaíoch agus talmhaíocht, a laghdú. Tá gá le húsáid níos éifeachtaigh agus níos coigiltí d'iompair agus d'earraí íditheora. Is tríd athruithe



den chineál seo a sháraítear, ag an bhfoinse, táirgeadh truflaise iomarcach agus brúnna ar aer, uisce agus talamh. Seo is brí le forbairt inmharthana.

Rachfadh luacháil agus meastóireacht níos fearr ar tháirgí agus ar sheirbhísí ábharthacha i gcabhair ar bhealaí níos inmharthanaí chuig gníomhaíocht eacnamaíochta. Ní mór turraing sálú imeallach de tháirgí agus seirbhísí a chur isteach ina gcostaisí, chun go mbeidh tuilleadh eolais ag íditheoirí ó chomharthaí praghsanna agus rogha margaidh á dhéanamh acu.

Ní iallach ar an eacnamaíocht í forbairt inmharthana. I gcás na hÉireann, cuireann sí go leor deiseanna ar fáil margáí méadaithe a bhaint amach do thionscail bunaithe ar achmhainní nádúrtha, agus sochar a bhaint as an margadh domhanda do tháirgí agus do sheirbhísí comhshaoil, atá ag fás go tapaidh. Is féidir le polasaí inmharthanachta fostaíocht in Éirinn a mhéadú, seachas a bheith mar bhagairt uirthi.

Tá an Stráitéis Rialtais seo tábhachtach chun fócas a thabhairt ar choincheap forbartha inmharthana agus ar phlean chun í a chur i ngníomh sna phríomh-earnálacha. Ach is saothar leanúnach í chun forbairt inmharthana a chur i gcrích; sin é an fáth go mbunaíonn an Stráitéis meicníochtaí le haghaidh monatóireacht agus athbhreithniú. Tá sé de chuspóir agam go mbainfí úsáid gníomhach astu siúd.

Táim sásta go dtaispeánann agus go gcuireann an Stráitéis seo le ceangal na hÉireann leis na prionsabail agus leis an gclár d'fhorbairt inmharthana a shocraíodh ag Cruinniú Mullaigh na Cruinne i Rio i 1992. Tugann sí freagra freisin ar an 5ú Clár Gníomhaíochta ar an dTimpeallacht den CE, a rinneadh athbhreithniú air le linn Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar an gComhphobal Eorpach, agus ina a bhfuil Éire páirteach go fuinniúil ina chomhlíonadh. Cabhróidh an Stráitéis le rannpháirtíocht na hÉireann san mhór-athbhreithniú ar Chlár 21 ag Seisiún Speisialta de Thionól Ginéarála na Náisiún Aontaithe i mí Mheithimh, 1997.

Breandán Ó hUilín  
Aire Comhshaoil

