

**Coalition 2030**  
*For Immediate Release*  
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## **Landmark Irish conference explores a Just Recovery from COVID-19 using the Sustainable Development Goals**

***Leading Thinkers and Civil Society Experts, including Dr Mike Ryan of WHO and Minister Eamon Ryan, put forward key recommendations on how the Sustainable Development Goals can Guide Ireland's Recovery from the pandemic.***

Coalition 2030 [1], Ireland's civil society alliance on the Sustainable Development Goals, today [14th July] hosted a conference [2] on the theme 'A Just Recovery from Covid-19: Using the Sustainable Development Goals to Guide Ireland's Recovery'. As the Government faces the challenges posed by the pandemic and begins to look towards long-term recovery, the conference explored the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals for a just recovery from Covid-19 and addressed deep-seated inequalities that the pandemic has exposed.

The conference featured significant contributions from keynote speakers:

**Speaking about the Sustainable Development Goals, Dr Mike Ryan, Executive Director of the World Health Organisation's Health Emergencies Programme said:**

*"The SDGs are becoming much less about development and more about survival ....maybe we should call them Sustainable 'Survival' Goals...this isn't just about development anymore this is really about survival of our civilization.."*

**Speaking about vaccine inequality between rich and poor countries, Dr Mike Ryan, Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme said:**

*"The tragedy of the moment is that we have developed scientific solutions to this pandemic faster than with any other time in the past. We have the money, the means and the science but we lack the will to share them to save the lives we need to save"*

*"There is less than half of 1 percent vaccination coverage with two doses in low income countries."*

*"But now we are talking about booster vaccines in the developed world..I'm being asked for my opinion about booster vaccines all day today"*

*"But no one is asking me for my opinion on the fact that there are people dying all over the world that don't need to die - no one is asking me about health workers who are going to work today in isolation wards all over the developing world without"*

*being vaccinated, risking their lives. But I'm being asked about booster vaccines for people in the developed world."*

*"Sometimes it gets very hard to take"*

**Dr Mike Ryan also spoke about the need to address issues in an interconnected way to recover from the pandemic. He said:**

*"We have the issues of health justice, social justice, climate justice, these things are becoming the same thing because one thing is affecting the other...social equity is affecting how we do in pandemics, it's affecting how we're dealing with climate - climate is affecting social equity, climate is affecting the potential for health crises - they are wrapped around each other now, they have become intertwined as threats and we can't deal with them separately anymore"*

**Dr Ryan stressed that it has become essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, noting that they are crucial for our survival. He said:**

*"We need to call them 'Sustainable Survival Goals'"*

**Also speaking about the Sustainable Development Goals, Minister Eamon Ryan noted:**

*"The framework provided by these Goals will provide a sustainable inclusive recovery and an equitable future for all people especially the most vulnerable. We're committed to ensuring a balanced and inclusive recovery..."*

The Minister also announced the development of a new national implementation plan for the Sustainable Development Goals based on a public consultation to be launched very soon which will address supports necessary for groups to participate with the SDGs.

Conference speakers also warned that rich countries are promoting false solutions to the climate crisis by making pledges to reach "net zero emissions". Instead of actually cutting their emissions they are relying on unproven negative emission technologies and are continuing to pollute.

**Speaking about this, Asad Rehman, Executive Director of War on Want said:**

*“The net zero mantra has become a license for continued pollution....relying on unproven, risky and non existent technology to suck out hundreds of billions of tons of carbon from the atmosphere”*

**Asad Rehman also called for an end to exploitation of poor countries by rich countries saying:**

*“For every \$1 that flows in aid to the global South, \$24 flows away from the global South”*

*“Since 1980 it has been calculated that \$16 trillion has flowed away from the global South in capital flows and \$4.5 trillion in debt repayments”*

*“It literally is that the global South is developing the global North”*

*“And as an example of colonial exploitation - it is estimated that the UK looted \$45 trillion from India alone”*

**Paola Simonetti, Deputy Director, International Trade Union Confederation, highlighted the impact of the pandemic on workers and called for a new, human centred economic model:**

*“COVID 19 has triggered an extraordinary wave of destruction across the world of work, the number of workers living in extreme or moderate poverty increased to 108 million in 2020”*

*“The current economic model is broken - we really need a more human centred approach”*

*“You cannot have a human centred approach if you don’t have Just Transition measures that can accompany the transition of workers when there are technological or climate shifts...we see that countries that have a stronger social protection system cope better now with the pandemic”*

**Jerry Mac Evilly Head of Policy, Friends of the Earth, stated:**

*“As the Government faces the challenges posed by the pandemic and begins to look towards long-term recovery, we have a chance to reset the clock and build back better. We cannot go back to the way things were before. First and foremost, this means that the Government must adopt the six principles for a fair and sustainable recovery produced by civil society [3] as part of its budget and recovery planning.”*

The conference highlighted that the COVID-19 crisis has seriously jeopardised progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Ireland has also failed to produce an adequate Implementation Plan to integrate the Global Goals into domestic policies. However, the impact of the pandemic has also made the achievement of the Goals all the more urgent and necessary and has underlined the importance of proper planning.

ENDS

**For more information or interviews contact:**

Deirdre Duff, Communications Coordinator: [deirdre@foe.ie](mailto:deirdre@foe.ie)

**Notes:**

[1] Coalition 2030 is an alliance of 75 civil society organisations working together to ensure Ireland keeps its promise to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both at home and abroad. The coalition is made up of both international and domestic NGOs along with youth organisations, environmental groups, academics, and trade unions. Its member organisations work in a broad variety of areas – from humanitarian relief to labour rights and environmental sustainability – in Ireland and around the world. See more [here](#).

[2] See further information on the conference [here](#). [Recording of keynote speeches will be uploaded in the coming days]

[3] During the Conference, civil society experts discussed the 2020 “[Shared Vision for a Just Recovery](#)” [3] - a joint statement endorsed by 14 national coalitions and 50+ organizations from all sectors of Irish civil society – which includes **6 principles** for a fair and sustainable recovery from the social and economic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic.