

## **IYP Draft Remarks**

by **Kevin Dowling**  
Counsellor, Mission of Ireland to the United Nations

The Millennium Development Goals set out the main development challenges facing the world today. The first of those goals is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Ireland, Italy and Spain see the International Year of the Potato as an opportunity to focus on the role agriculture can play in improving nutrition and food security and thus contribute to meeting the MDGS. To this end we are pleased to have been able to support FAO activities for the International Year, for which Ireland is providing \$300,000, Italy is providing \$50,000 and Spain is providing \$44,246.

In addition, Ireland is providing €200,000 in core funding for the three years 2007-2009 to the International Potato Centre, CIP, in Peru and a further €320,000 for a CIP research project in Malawi in 2007 and 2008.

An Irish National Coordinating Committee has planned a programme of events for Ireland with an emphasis on nutrition. This will include activities for schools including a primary school competition that aims to promote both the awareness and the growing of the potato.

Ireland's commitment to combating hunger is not without historical reason. The failure of the potato crop in Ireland in the 1840s led to a famine that left 1.5 million dead and forced 1 million to emigrate. Since then, Ireland's fortunes have changed and we are now a prosperous nation, but hunger and food insecurity continue to hamper progress in reaching the MDGs in many developing countries. Earlier this year Ireland established a Hunger Task Force with the aim of identifying the particular contribution that Ireland can make to international efforts to eliminate hunger and tackle food insecurity. The Task Force brings together leading figures from international organisations, the non-governmental sector, third level institutions, Government and the private sector and includes Dr. Pamela K. Anderson, Director General of the CIP. The first meeting of the Task Force took place on 14 September 2007 and three further meetings are planned. The Task Force will report to Irish Aid in 2008 with analysis and recommendations on how Ireland can best address the issue of world hunger through specific policy formulation, programming engagement and targeted resource allocation.

This year we are at the mid-point between the adoption of the MDGs and the 2015 target date for their achievement. We should use this chance to monitor progress, assess results and renew the efforts of the international community to eradicate poverty and food insecurity. The potato is a staple food for so many of the world's people and Ireland, Italy and Spain believe that the activities and events which will take place throughout the International Year will raise awareness of the role of the potato in food security and in income generation and will thus contribute to our efforts to achieve the MDGs.