

PRESS RELEASE

Not for use before 1 am on Thursday 30 September

MARY ROBINSON TO GIVE MAJOR ADDRESS ON CLIMATE JUSTICE IN BELFAST

The former Irish President, Dr Mary Robinson, will give a major speech on international development, social justice and climate change at a conference at Queen's University Belfast this morning.

She will say: "Climate justice brings together human rights and development with new thinking on common but differentiated responsibilities for carbon emissions, from the perspective of poorer communities that are affected." She will call on world leaders, and particularly women world leaders, to address climate and development challenges in tandem. "That means, for example, integrating national Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategies with the national-level climate change adaptation plans of action being put in place in countries around the globe — a process that happens all too infrequently today."

Dr Robinson is the founding president of the New York-based Realizing Rights: the Ethical Globalisation Initiative, whose mission is "to put human rights standards at the heart of global governance and policy-making and to ensure that the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable are addressed on the global stage." She is a former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The three-day conference, which was opened yesterday by the Minister for Employment and Learning, Sir Reg Empey MLA, brings together over 100 senior academics and researchers from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. They are discussing how universities in Ireland and Africa can work together to research and develop ways of tackling poverty in Africa through projects in health, education, gender, environment and ICT.

Speaking about the Irish-African Partnership, which organised the conference, Sir Reg said: "The Irish-African Partnership demonstrates an excellent example of the collaboration between our Northern Ireland universities and our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. The opportunity to share experiences and resources to the benefit of others in such a unique way is extremely commendable and will undoubtedly have long term benefits for all concerned."

Other speakers include Tom Arnold, Chief Executive of Concern Worldwide, who will speak on hunger and food security; Professor Myles Wickstead, the former head of Tony Blair's Commission for Africa; Dick Spring, the former Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs; Professor Brian O'Connell, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape in South Africa; and Professor Yunus Mgaya, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

Speakers and delegates were welcomed to the conference by Professor Peter Gregson, Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast, and Professor Frank Kee, Director of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration Centre of Excellence for Public Health at the university, who is an Irish-African Partnership executive committee member.

This evening (Thursday) the conference will move to the University of Ulster to be welcomed by Vice Chancellor Professor Richard Barnett. This will be the occasion for the Northern Ireland launch of the *Commission for Africa Five Year Review Report* by Professor Wickstead.

The Irish-African Partnership (IAP), the conference organiser, brings together 13 universities in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. The IAP is funded by Irish Aid, the Irish Government's development cooperation agency, and Universities Ireland, the network which links all nine universities on the island of Ireland.

Further information from

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Note to Editors:

The Irish-African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (Irish-African Partnership or IAP for short) was set up in autumn 2007. Under the auspices of Universities Ireland – the all-Ireland universities network – it brings together Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Dublin City University, University of Limerick/Mary Immaculate College, University of Malawi, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Makerere University (Uganda) and the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh..

It has undertaken five work packages over the past three years: an international summer school (in University of Malawi) to prepare a 'Research Capacity for Development' Resource Book for higher education institutions working in international development (which will be launched during the Queen's conference at a Stormont reception by Mr Jim Wells MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly's All Party Group on International Development); a Stakeholder Consultation among 400 senior academics to assess the state of research in health, education, gender and ICT for development in the 13 participating universities; a 'Foresight Report' on priority needs in health and education in the four participating African countries over the next decade; the drawing up of a set of Metrics by which research capacity building for development can be measured; and development of a new Irish-African Web Portal (www.irishafricanpartnership.ie) to showcase development research and information through a digital repository and research register. In addition, a number of new research networks have been set up: e.g. between University of Ulster and three African universities in the area of teacher education (funded by the British Council).

Previous IAP workshops and summer schools have taken place in Dublin in April 2008; in Entebbe, Uganda in November 2008; in Maputo, Mozambique, in May 2009; and in Zomba, Malawi in March 2010.