

Mr Joe Costello T.D.
Minister for Trade and Development
Department of Foreign Affairs
Iveagh House
St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

12th June 2012

Dear Minister Costello,

Re: Your Attendance at the Rio+20 Summit

We were delighted to learn that you will be attending the Rio+20 summit next week. It is good news that Ireland's perspective on the social and human development dimensions of sustainability will be represented at ministerial level.

We are particularly pleased a Labour minister will be attending the summit given your party's long-standing commitment to action on climate change. Labour was the only party to put a commitment to climate legislation into your 2007 general election manifesto. It must be a matter of some pride that the Programme for Government contains a commitment to climate legislation and that the Roadmap published by Minister Hogan in January commits to publishing Heads of Bill in the fourth quarter of this year and having a climate law passed in 2013.

We would urge you to ensure that this commitment and timeline are fully reflected in Ireland's presentation to the summit.

On a related matter, we were disappointed by the manner in which "Our Sustainable Future", Ireland's principal input to Rio, was launched last week with nothing more than a photocall and no questions allowed from journalists. Public participation is at the heart of sustainable development and it can't happen without a fully informed public. Equally, the transformation required to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability will require sustained political leadership and that was not in evidence last week.

Ideally, this landmark document (the first since the 1997 NSDS launched with great fanfare by Brendan Howlin when he was Minister for Environment) should have been debated in the Dáil before the Rio summit. That may no longer be possible given the timing but we would urge you to ensure that Our Sustainable Future is debated by the Dáil after Rio and before the summer recess. Such a debate and all-party backing for a resolution of the house will build public and political support for sustainable development and show Ireland is serious about following up Rio with action here at home in the coming months and years.

Looking forward to hearing from you on these matters before you leave for the summit and wishing you every success in your efforts to secure a positive outcome to the deliberations in Rio.

Yours sincerely,