Good morning. I am delighted to welcome you all to Dublin.

I would in particular like to extend a warm Irish welcome to our friends from the European Commission. We are mid way through our Presidency of the European Council and have been heartened by the spirit of collaboration and commitment shown across our development and humanitarian communities.

Our Presidency has come at a critical time in international development, as we approach the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and look to shaping the post 2015 agenda.

For the term of our Presidency, we have identified three priority themes. The three are closely inter-linked and are relevant to today’s discussions.

Firstly, we are building consensus on how the EU can improve the resilience of vulnerable communities to natural and man-made crises, such as the current food crises in Africa. We need to systematically address the risks that lead to crises and that erode hard-won development gains. Key to this is forging stronger links between the development and humanitarian agendas of the European Union.
Today’s discussions focus on how, working together, we can support individuals, communities, countries and regions to build their resilience to shocks.

Secondly, we are working with our European colleagues to shape a European Union position for the UN Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals in September which will also consider the post-2015 development framework. Ireland is committed to ensuring that food & nutrition security is given appropriate consideration in the elaboration of this new framework.

Finally, we aim to increase understanding of the linkages between hunger, nutrition and climate justice.

Climate change and environmental degradation is already increasing the risk of hunger and under-nutrition for the world’s poor and most marginalised people who struggle to survive in often the riskiest environments. As many of you are aware, an international conference will take place here in Dublin next month.

The objective is to facilitate a dialogue on these linked challenges, encourage and inspire innovative thinking and solutions, and listen to and learn from the experiences of local people and robust evidence to inform a new approach to addressing hunger, nutrition and climate justice, in the context of the new international development agenda.
The day to day experience of small holder farmers in developing countries, and those most directly affected by under-nutrition and climate change, will be central to this conference. We hope to draw upon the experience of Irish Aid funded programmes in Lesotho, Ethiopia and Malawi to illustrate how local engagement and local solutions can help address global challenges.

Today offers an opportunity for dialogue also. We will hear from Alliance 2015 members and partners presenting concrete examples of programmes that are successfully addressing nutrition and resilience in less developed countries.

I am delighted that the European Commission has now developed a key policy document addressing resilience and is currently finalising a new policy addressing under-nutrition.

The Communication on Addressing Maternal and Child Under-nutrition in External Assistance will recognise the important role of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement; which has brought together donor and developing country governments, UN and international organisations, civil society and the private sector to tackle hunger and under-nutrition, and the need to focus on maternal, infant and child under-nutrition in the 1,000 day window of opportunity from pregnancy to the age of two. This echoes Ireland’s approach and reinforces European leadership in the area of under-nutrition. We are particularly pleased that this policy is a joint initiative of the humanitarian and development arms of the Commission.
The recent Communication on the EU Approach to Resilience recognises that a focus on the root causes of crises is essential in tackling recurrent and predictable disasters.

Leadership and coherence are important. But delivering on results and commitments are essential if we are to have an impact. Ireland intends to bring to the Foreign Affairs Council in May a strong set of draft conclusions covering the resilience and nutrition policies as well as an EU food and nutrition security implementation plan currently under development. This Implementation Plan will set out how the EU policy commitments translate into action over the period particularly in areas such as resilience, social protection and nutrition. The Plan will help ensure that the EU and its Member States are held to account in delivering on their agreed policy commitments.

At the informal meeting of Development Ministers here in Dublin last month, we discussed the opportunities and lessons already learned on how best to build the resilience of vulnerable communities and to link relief, rehabilitation and development.

While we cannot stop shocks and natural hazards from happening, we can – and must – do more to help vulnerable people and countries withstand them.

Last year, I had the opportunity to travel to Ethiopia, where I learned about the Productive Safety Nets Programme. Using Government systems, it provides timely
and predictable transfers of income or food in exchange for labour on public works. This programme played a critical role in ensuring Ethiopia’s resilience to drought in 2011. This visit illustrated to me a practical approach to breaking down the silos to humanitarian and development work.

This month, we have invited colleagues from the development and humanitarian working groups to visit Ethiopia and to see at first hand how resilience can be built into programming decisions in order to respond to the realities faced by communities and individuals living in fragile environments.

For today’s discussion, the key question is: how can we better link our humanitarian and development work to address resilience and ensure food and nutrition security for all in a changing world?

We need all development partners – governments at local as well as regional and national levels, donors, multilateral institutions, civil society, private sector, and others - to coordinate our actions, especially where it matters the most, at country-level. I am particularly pleased therefore to be present today to meet you all and to hear from representatives from civil society who have been engaged at country level in linking nutrition and resilience to support communities exposed to risk.

I’d like to pose a number of questions for you to consider:

- Can we together look at new and innovative approaches that are more predictable, flexible and responsive?
- How can we work better with national governments and communities and support their capacity for disaster preparedness and management?

- What are the key messages which could be incorporated in any follow-up work on Resilience at EU level, or in the policy and programming work of Alliance 2015 members and partners?

- How can we target our assistance to the areas and people we know are the most vulnerable?

- How can we work together with communities, governments, other donors and regional and international organisations to ensure that we have solid and joint analysis of the underlying causes of crises and the best means to tackle them at a country level?

These are but some of the questions we need to tackle as we intensify our common effort to build the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable in disaster-prone developing countries.

In conclusion I would like to point highlight three themes to frame your discussions over the course of the day:

- First of all, it is clear to me that responsibility for building resilience and preventing disasters does not lie with the humanitarian community alone.
Rather, it is a concern for everyone – from citizens and individuals who must be empowered to make decisions which reduce risk, to political leaders, government institutions, the private sector and civil society. Everyone has a role to play.

- Second, it is clear that humanitarian and development interventions need to be ‘risk proofed’ to prepare and protect people from shocks and stresses. The impact of disasters on people and their environment can be altered by the right kind of development choices: how food is grown; where and how homes are built; what is taught in schools; what infrastructure and services are prioritised; how equal the society is; and how just the policies and practices in place actually are.

- Finally, Ireland is using the opportunity of its Presidency of the European Council to present a coherent set of draft council conclusions in May. The draft conclusions on food and nutrition security and on resilience are closely linked and mutually dependent. We have before us an opportunity and an obligation to implement these policies and thus support our partner governments to ensure security and opportunities for millions of individuals around the world.
Before I conclude I want to take this opportunity pay tribute to Tom Arnold, who has moved on from his CEO role in Concern and has taken up the Chair of Ireland’s Constitution Convention.

Over the last decade Tom has been at the helm of Ireland’s largest development NGO as it responded to humanitarian and development challenges. Concern is a valued partner for Irish Aid – both in delivering programmes and in advancing policy to address poverty and inequality to effect change in the lives of the world’s poorest communities.

Tom has played a key role in helping to shape Government policy on development aid, in particular as a member of the Irish Hunger Task Force. He has worked at a global level with Heads of State and representatives from business and international organisations in the Lead Group of the Scaling Up Nutrition movement.

Tom has led Concern with passion, drive and commitment. The respect with which he is held here in Ireland and internationally is a testament to the enormous contribution he has made to improving the lives of some of the world’s most vulnerable communities.

It has been a pleasure to work with Tom in furthering our efforts in tackling poverty and hunger. I know he will continue to be an advocate for global development. I want to congratulate Tom heartily on a job well done as CEO of Concern and to wish him every success as he carries out his new role on the Constitution Convention and

Thank you once more for inviting me here today. I wish you well in your deliberations and look forward to hearing your conclusions.

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