The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD reviewed the Irish development co-operation programme and policies on 21st September 1994. The Delegation of Ireland was headed by Mr. Ronan Murphy, Assistant Secretary, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs. The examining countries were the Netherlands and Norway.

The Chair of the DAC, Mr. James H. Michel, summarised the main points discussed in the review:

-- The Committee was impressed by the new basis for Ireland’s aid programme created by the Strategy Plan of July 1993 ("Irish Aid: Consolidation and Growth"). The Plan, which covers the period through 1997, contains firm commitments for regular increases of the aid volume to 0.40 per cent of gross national product (GNP) by 1997 and for further improvements to aid quality. The volume of bilateral assistance will more than double to reach two-thirds of total official development assistance (ODA), compared with one-half at present. The number of priority recipient countries will increase from four to six, all in Africa.

-- The volume of Ireland’s assistance rose from $70 million in 1992 to $81 million in 1993, an increase of almost one-third in real terms (constant 1992 prices and exchange rates) and reached 0.20 per cent of GNP in 1993. Bilateral Irish aid has generally been of high quality, with a grass-roots and participatory character and with an emphasis on capacity-building. Extensive use is made of volunteers and non-government organisations (NGOs). The Committee encouraged the Irish authorities to continue on this path, stressing at the same time how important it will be to match expanding bilateral programmes with strengthened aid management capacity and improved co-ordination with recipient governments and other donors of aid.
-- It was noted with interest that, to achieve these objectives, aid administration has been strengthened numerically, new field offices are being established and staff training programmes have been set up. The Irish authorities also intend to introduce aid programmes for individual recipients ("country programmes"), based, among other things, on systematic ex post evaluation of aid activities. Funding for the Agency for Personal Service Overseas, the volunteer agency, is being increased to raise substantially the number of Irish volunteers working in developing countries. Co-operation with Irish NGOs is being reinforced through increasing allocations for cofinancing under improved procedures and an Irish Aid Advisory Committee has been set up. The Committee discussed the issues of programme design and implementation which will confront the Irish aid authorities in assuring the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme, particularly of volunteer-based activities on a much expanded scale.

The DAC’s summary and conclusions of the review will be published together with the report by the OECD Secretariat on Ireland’s aid programme.