

**Roundtable discussions on strategies for sustainable
chemicals and waste management:**

13 May 2010 (3.00p.m – 6.00p.m.)

Statement by Mr. John Gormley T.D.

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Ireland

I should state at the outset that Ireland is fully aligned with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

The current challenge posed by the economic downturn also presents opportunities. Those opportunities are rooted in the compelling reasons for moving from a focus on residual waste management towards policies driven by prevention, minimisation, reuse and recycling, policies which view waste as a valuable resource rather than a problem that is literally buried.

Much more needs to be done to drive the prevention of waste. Ireland has led the way in the use of economic instruments to deliver behavioural changes. The levy on plastic bags has reduced the per capita usage of such bags by more than 90% in the period since its introduction in 2001. I note with interest the Secretary General's observation in his report on waste management on the progress being made by Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda on restricting the use of plastic bags. This is reflective of the progress being made by communities in the developing world in developing better waste management practices.

I am currently revising Ireland's landfill levy system to encompass other residual waste treatment facilities to ensure waste which can be recycled is not drawn to lower tiers of the waste hierarchy, and to focus the minds of the producers of waste on the volumes they generate.

Ireland's waste prevention programme has a number of initiatives aimed at both individuals and businesses. I am encouraged by the development, as part of the programme, of online facilities which provide audit tools in respect of water, waste and energy. The users of these tools have made significant savings for their businesses, showing that what's good for the environment is also good for the "bottom line" on which business is focused.

While individual States can make progress, our engagement with multinational industries is immeasurably strengthened if we speak as one. Therefore, I am encouraged by the debate here today and the commitment of all members to the issue.

We need to support innovative entrepreneurs in developing sustainable uses for resources which are currently consigned to

landfills or incinerators. The development of green technologies has been identified as a key component in the recovery of economies worldwide.

I have recently published a report reviewing Ireland's waste management policy. The report will underpin the development of new policies which will have as their driving principle a resource-based sustainable approach to waste management. I will be setting challenging targets for those involved in the production, collection and management of waste.

We are at a crossroads in the development of sustainable waste management. We need to seize the opportunities presented and we in Ireland intend to be to the forefront in innovation in resource-based waste management.

Thank you