

Press release

Statement by the Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin

From [Department of Foreign Affairs \(/en/organisation/departments/departments-of-foreign-affairs/\)](/en/organisation/departments/departments-of-foreign-affairs/).

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I am proud to be part of, and to have lead, a government that has been particularly ambitious in exerting Ireland's influence abroad.

From our principled and successful membership of the UN Security Council in 2021/2021 and strong defence of multilateralism; to our leadership at the EU, including in ensuring a unified approach in responding to Brexit; to our Global Ireland strategy, under which we've opened 19 new Embassies and Consulates all around the world since 2018 and strengthened the presence of our State Agencies in key markets; to the record levels of ODA that we have provided, focused on ending poverty and food insecurity; to our commitment to double our international climate finance by 2025; to our consistent work in Northern Ireland in support of the Good Friday Agreement – Ireland has had an impact and made a difference.

Since Russia's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which blatantly violated the UN Charter and international law and fundamentally altered the European security environment, every country in Europe has examined and re-examined its foreign, security and defence policies.

Ireland is no different. To shy away from doing so – or to do so behind closed doors – would have been a fundamental mistake and an abrogation of responsibility.

Ireland has consistently taken multilateralism seriously, and wants to see a strong and effective United Nations. In that context we have a responsibility to hold Russia to account, and to address the implications of its actions for the rules based international

system.

It is a fundamental duty of government to address the challenging global situation as it is today.

Political leadership means taking on the responsibility of putting in place policies and practises to keep this country, and its people, safe and secure. In my view, it also means having an open, inclusive, evidence-based and public debate on these issues.

The Consultative Forum on International Security Policy is the first time that any Irish Government has established such a debate.

The Forum starts next week - in Cork on the 22nd, Galway on the 23rd and Dublin on the 25th and 27th. It will discuss a range of issues relating to the global and European security environment and how Ireland's foreign, security and defence policy is responding to this new environment.

Almost 900 people have already registered to attend and we have received over 300 written submissions. I encourage everyone who is interested to send us a submission with their views, to register to attend, or to watch online.

All of the discussions will be livestreamed at [www.gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie/en/). (<https://www.gov.ie/en/>). I want as many people as possible to hear from the almost 80 different panellists, from a wide range of backgrounds and with a variety of expertise and experience, including in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, arms control and disarmament and conflict resolution internationally, as well as in the fields of cyber security, disinformation, maritime security and critical infrastructure.

The Forum is not a binary discussion on neutrality and was never intended to be. The government have made clear that we do not intend to change Ireland's policy of military neutrality.

We have also made clear that this policy does not inure us from dealing thoughtfully and responsibly with the global and European security environment that we find ourselves in, and the new and emerging threats that we face. Nor does it mean that we should isolate ourselves, or assume we have nothing to learn from, or contribute to, the wider

debate about European security. In this 50th year of our EU membership, it is more important than ever to recognise, understand and debate our place at the heart of Europe, including in relation to the EU's common foreign and security policy.

The aim of this Forum from the start has been to prompt a national discussion on Ireland's foreign, security and defence policy. We want to hear from as many people as possible, with a diverse range of experiences, expertise and views. This is a conversation for everyone.

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