

Mr. Mark Deering,
Director Sky Ireland,
1-2 Baggot Court,
Lower Baggot Street,
Dublin 2

10 Nov. 03

Dear Mark,

It was nice to meet with you again at the recent TIF Cable and Broadcasting Group.

As mentioned in the meeting, the Department is very interested in an open and ongoing dialogue with industry as we continue to explore options and develop policy around digital broadcasting. As you can appreciate, digital broadcasting policy is a complicated matter in that it encompasses a whole spectrum of issues, from technical dilemmas about platform usage and inter-operability, to legal issues concerning programme-broadcasting rights.

At this point in time, the Department is interested in garnering the views of industry, individually and collectively, with regard to the development of digital television in Ireland. We would be very interested to receive the written opinions and analysis of Sky in this regard, preferably before 28th November. Any such correspondence will, of course, be treated as highly confidential.

Specifically, you might wish to address the following questions in any submission:

What do you see as being the way forward for the introduction of digital television in Ireland?

What role do you perceive Sky as having in any migration to digital television?

In what way might satellite-network rollout, technology and commercial development plans best be advanced to meet the requirements of digital broadcasting in Ireland?

What would Sky identify as the principal infrastructure deficits that might stand in the way of extensive delivery of digital television broadcasting in Ireland?

What overlaps do you perceive with the provision of other 'information age' services such as internet and the delivery of digital television?

Given that this correspondence arises from informal discussions between the Department and TIF, any correspondence from either the Department or Sky within this context is considered as part of an overall engagement and information-sharing exercise. While highly valued, correspondence from either party will not be considered by the Department to have any legally binding or formal connotations.

Yours sincerely,

pp

Kevin O'Brien,
Broadcasting Division.

MR. MARK DEERING: Thank you very much, Chairman. Sky

22 welcomes the consultation and thanks very much the
23 organisers for their invitation to attend. I would add, at
24 the outset, that we are attending as observers. We are
25 interested parties in the proceedings, but we are very
26 interested to hear what any of the other parties have to
27 say. We have made a submission to the Department of
28 Communications and we are going to await the results of the
29 designation procedure.

30

65

1 CHAIRMAN: But I can surely reasonably ask you whether you
2 support the Government's basic approach at this moment?

3

4 MR. DEERING: Well, I think that it's clear that the
5 Government has the right to intervene as it deems
6 appropriate. I think that just if I could outline just
7 briefly the main points of our submission.

8

9 We believe that any proposed intervention in the
10 marketplace must be very carefully considered and balanced
11 and proportional.

12

13 During the process, consideration of the impact of

14 designating events should take into account all relevant
15 factors, including the consequent impact on revenues to the
16 relevant sports organisations, and, as John Treacy
17 eloquently outlined, their ability to compete at an
18 international level compared to their competitors.

19

20 I think that, also, the Minister might take into account
21 the impact on the broadcasting market in Ireland.

22

23 I think on a couple of specific points, now that I have
24 started: Just on the contract itself which gave rise to, I
25 think, this consultation. Prior to June 2002, Sky enjoyed
26 non-exclusive rights to broadcast Ireland's home qualifying
27 matches for Euro 2004 and the 2006 World Cup. In 2002,
28 this year, building on the existing relationship, the FAI
29 offered Sky the opportunity to acquire exclusive rights in
30 relation to those matches which were not at the time

66

1 designated events. Sky understands that the FAI was unable
2 to obtain what it considered a fair market price for the
3 rights from the ...(inaudible)... terrestrial broadcaster.

4

5 Then, Sky believes that the objective of the Broadcasting
6 Act, 1999, is satisfied by the contractual arrangements

7 entered into by the FAI. Accordingly, there is no need to
8 designate the events the subject of these contractual
9 arrangements under the act. Live coverage on Sky, in line
10 with the availability of 'as live' full coverage of the
11 matches on TV3 within approximately one hour of the end of
12 each qualifying match, adequately meets any requirement
13 that access to broadcast of these events should remain
14 available to the vast majority of the Irish population.

15

16 Just finally, anecdotally, experience has shown that the
17 combination of live pay-TV and delayed-in-full terrestrial
18 coverage can achieve as large an audience for the event as
19 live terrestrial coverage alone.

20

21 In the UK in 1997, Italy V England, a crucial qualifying
22 match in Rome, that full coverage of the game was watched
23 by over 22 million people in the UK; 12 million live on
24 Sky, in their own homes, as a ...(inaudible)... across the
25 country and 11 million on ITV on a delay basis, which would
26 be similar to the TV3 situation. This combined audience
27 compared very favourably with similar matches shown
28 exclusively live on free-to-air channels, so the BBC was
29 showing the other qualifiers. So I'll leave it at that,
30 Chairman.

1

2 CHAIRMAN: Thank you. A few obvious questions. First of
3 all, on the hour, the delayed coverage, an hour, I mean,
4 you can take an arbitrary time, could you live - and I
5 fully understand the importance of exclusivity and live,
6 that is what you are paying for - could you live with a
7 shorter period elapsing between the end of the game and the
8 beginning of the deferred coverage, or is an hour the rough
9 and ready minimum that you would accept?

10

11 MR. DEERING: Well, I think that that was the time period
12 contained within the contract, so I don't think it's
13 appropriate now to go renegotiating the contract as it
14 currently stands. That was the period.

15

16 CHAIRMAN: Which leads me into my next obvious question.
17 The government is clearly -- has clearly said that, under
18 EU law, they have the right to enter into retrospective
19 legislation. If the government decides to do that, what
20 will you do?

21

22 MR. DEERING: Well, I don't think it's appropriate for me
23 to comment at this stage.

24

25 CHAIRMAN: Will you go to law?

26

27 MR. DEERING: I think I had outlined earlier that we will
28 await the results of the designation process.

29

30 CHAIRMAN: But you will not rule out going to law if there

68

1 is a retrospective situation?

2

3 MR. DEERING: Chairman, I must say that we will await the
4 outcome of the designation process.

5

6 CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that. One last tiny question,
7 just to clear up a little bit of mystery: You use the
8 words "the FAI offered us exclusive rights". Are you
9 saying you did not approach the FAI and this deal resulted
10 entirely as a result of their initiative?

11

12 MR. DEERING: I think it's important to recognise that Sky
13 has established an important partnership with the FAI and
14 wishes to continue that partnership and --

15

16 CHAIRMAN: Which doesn't even begin to answer my question.

17

18 MR. DEERING: I think it's important to recognise that the
19 sports organisations, several sports organisations and Sky
20 have established increasingly important relationships and
21 those relationships have benefited by ...(inaudible)...
22 Sky, but indeed, have considerably benefited the sports
23 organisations as well, as John Treacy referred to earlier.

24

25 CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much indeed.

26

27 MR. ALAN HUNTER: Can we have the question answered,
28 please.

29

30 CHAIRMAN: I did ask him twice, but I am not Jeremy Paxman;

69

1 I don't do it ten times. I assumed that he had actually
2 answered it in a way to say that there was somehow this
3 approach coming out of the blue would not really describe
4 the continual relationship between the bodies and that the
5 starting point was probably two to tango --

6

7 MR. ALAN HUNTER: Mr. Chairman, the question is very
8 simple: Did the FAI offer exclusive rights to Sky Sports,
9 or did they not?

10

11 CHAIRMAN: I will ask it one last time. Did the FAI
12 approach Sky and offer exclusive rights or was Sky involved
13 also in asking for such a thing?

14

15 MR. DEERING: Chairman, I think you answered the question
16 for me more eloquently than I attempted to. We have an
17 ongoing relationship with the FAI, we have been
18 broadcasting FAI matches for a number of years now and we
19 wish to continue that fruitful relationship. Thank you.

20

21 CHAIRMAN: I think that is -- Mr. Deering is not going to
22 go any further and you must make your own judgments as to
23 how that deal came about. Next person?

21 August 2002

Dermot Ahern
Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural resources
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural resources
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2

Dear Minister,

Sky Television welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation on the designation of events under the Broadcasting (Major Events Television Coverage) Act 1999.

Below is a brief submission on the issues raised by the proposed list.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Deering
Director, Sky Ireland

Consultation on Designation of Certain Events as Events of Major Importance to Society

Response by Sky Television

Sky welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources consultation on the designation of events under the Broadcasting (Major Events Television Coverage) Act, 1999, which gives effect to EC Directive 89/552 as amended (the Television without Frontiers Directive).

By way of introduction, Sky takes this opportunity to offer some background on Sky's position in the Irish marketplace.

Introduction

- Thirteen years ago Sky pioneered direct to home (DTH) satellite broadcasting in the UK and Ireland.
- In 1998 Sky launched the first digital broadcast services in the UK and Ireland. To date Sky has invested over £2bn in digital television, including over €85m in Ireland.
- As at 30 June 2002, 245,000 homes in Ireland subscribed to Sky Digital (over 20% of households) and a further 600,000 homes are able to receive Sky channels via cable and/or MMDS.
- Sky Sports has been available in Ireland since 1991. This has brought a huge increase in the range, depth and quality of coverage of sports. Together, 5 Sky channels, Sky Sports 1,2,3, Sky Sports Extra and Sky Sports News broadcast more than 33,000 hours of sport every year, around a third of which is live programming. In addition, Sky Sports Active embraces 10 different sports, allowing sports fans to access statistics, choose camera angles and even choose between live matches.
- A host of other sports channels are also available on the digital satellite platform, including Eurosport, attheraces, gobarkingmad and Setanta Sports (a channel featuring extensive GAA coverage).
- Sky's channels are licensed and regulated by the UK Independent Television Commission (ITC) pursuant to the UK Broadcasting Acts 1990 and 1996. In addition, Sky is subject to EC competition law and to individual national regimes in the UK and Ireland.

Sky's Comments on the Consultation

- Sky acknowledges that the Television without Frontiers Directive (as amended) allows (but does not require) Member States of the European Union to draw up a list of events of major importance for society so as not to deprive a substantial proportion of the public of the possibility of following them 'via live coverage or deferred coverage on free television'. Sky notes that since the relevant provisions of the Directive were adopted in 1997 only 5 of the 15 Member States have listed events (and one (Denmark) has subsequently withdrawn its list).
- Prior to June 2002 Sky enjoyed non-exclusive rights to broadcast Ireland's home qualifying football matches for Euro 2004 and the 2006 World Cup. In 2002, building on the existing relationship, the FAI offered Sky the opportunity to acquire exclusive rights in relation to those matches, which were not, at the time of acquisition, designated events. Sky understands that the FAI was unable to obtain what it considered to be a fair market price for the rights from the incumbent terrestrial broadcaster.
- Sky believes that the objective of The Broadcasting (Major Events Television Coverage) Act 1999 is satisfied by the contractual arrangements entered into by the FAI. Accordingly, there is no need to designate the events the subject of these contractual arrangements under the 1999 Act. Live coverage on Sky combined with the availability of 'as live' full coverage of the matches on TV3 within approximately 1 hour of the end of each qualifying match adequately meets any requirement that access to broadcasts of these events should remain available to the vast majority of the Irish population.
- Experience has shown that a combination of live pay-TV and delayed-in-full terrestrial coverage can achieve as large an audience for the event as can live terrestrial coverage alone. For example, independent research commissioned by Sky regarding the 1997 Italy-England World Cup qualifying match in Rome (a key fixture for England) found that full coverage of the game was watched by over 22 million people in the UK: 12 million live on Sky in their own homes, as a guest, or in pubs and clubs across the country, and 11 million on ITV on a delayed basis. This combined audience compares favourably with similar matches shown exclusively live on free to air channels. Moreover, viewers were not denied access and the sports body was able to allocate the rights on the basis which it thought best.
- It is also instructive to examine the more proportionate approach to listed events adopted by the 4 other Member States where lists are in force:
 - The UK list does not include any qualifying matches for either the European Championship or the World Cup.

- The Italian list, whilst including these matches involving the national team, does not require that such matches must be made available live by 'qualifying broadcasters' - i.e. deferred coverage would satisfy the requirements of the list for such matches.
 - The German list also includes the European Championship and World Cup qualifying matches involving the national team, but the 'qualifying broadcaster' coverage threshold is set at 66%.
 - Finally, the Austrian legislation, which unlike the Irish legislation incorporates a list of events within the Act itself, also includes qualifying matches involving the national team but stipulates that it "shall not apply to television broadcasting rights acquired prior to the entry into force of this Act" (a similar proviso applies under UK legislation).
- More generally, Sky considers that the interests of the rights holders must be taken into account in determining which events to designate. Experience elsewhere shows that designating events deprives the sports concerned of revenue streams which can be invested to the benefit of the sport itself. Moreover, listing ignores the professional judgement of those best placed to balance between the needs of their own particular sports and the television viewer.
 - In addition to the specified criteria to which the Minister must have regard under the 1999 Act when designating events, namely the extent to which the event has a special general resonance and a distinct cultural importance for the people of Ireland, Sky would welcome guidance as to how the Minister proposes to interpret these criteria.
 - Also, the Minister, under the 1999 Act "must have regard to all the circumstances" in making a designation. In order to ensure that the process of designation is objective, consistent and transparent, guidance should specify all of the circumstances and criteria which the Minister will take into account. In particular, the circumstances to which the Minister should have regard would include:
 - The impact of listing in reducing the potential income of the sport.
 - The consequences of such a reduction on a sport's investment in increasing participation and/or improving levels of performance and/or in creating improved facilities.
 - The ability of sports bodies to acquire revenue from broadcasters compared to international counterparts with whom they compete.

- The likely impact of listing on the broadcasting market including future investment in sports broadcasting, the level of competition in the marketplace and the future development and uptake of new digital services.

August 2002

Note for File

As per the Secretary General's request to Sheila Clifford, I rang Mark Deering, BSkyB in Ireland, and told him that the Department would be placing an advertisement in Monday's newspapers announcing a public meeting on 26 August 2002 on the designation of certain sports events. I made it clear that BSkyB would be very welcome to attend and/or make a submission to the Minister. Mr Deering was appreciative of the call and undertook to make this view known to Sky Sports.

John Larkin
Assistant Principal
Broadcasting Division

9th August 2002

FORUM ON BROADCASTING

PUBLIC SESSION

ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH JUNE 2002

HELD AT ROYAL HOSPITAL, KILMAINHAM, DUBLIN

I hereby certify the following to be a true and accurate transcript of my shorthand notes of the above named proceedings.

Bobine Gallagher

**DOYLE COURT REPORTERS LIMITED,
2, ARRAN QUAY, DUBLIN 7.**

Tel872 2833
Fax872 4486
After Hours286 2097
E-mail.....info@doylecourtreporters.com

COPYRIGHT

Transcripts are the work of the shorthand writer and they must not be printed, photocopied, electronically transmitted or reproduced in any form or supplied or loaned by an appellant to a respondent or to any other party without written permission from the shorthand writer.

1 the moment. Of course I will check first thing tomorrow
2 with the secretariat and I will certainly be in touch with
3 the group. I am anxious to receive and have a long
4 discussion if they feel so inclined.

5
6 MR. SNOODY: Okay. Thanks. At the back.

7
8 MR. DEERING: Hello. Mark Deering, Sky Ireland. Just very
9 briefly, thank you very much for the opportunity to address
10 the gathering here. I'm just briefly a little confused by
11 Mr. Hetherington's comments about Sky television in
12 Ireland. In Marketing Magazine last week, the publication
13 last week there was an interview with Mr. Hetherington and
14 the sales director of TV3 and, if I can quote:

15
16 "The Sky opt out was first seen as a threat but since then
17 we have grown our business up to 50%. It doesn't seem to
18 have affected us at all".

19
20 So I am a little confused as to why Mr. Hetherington felt
21 it appropriate to criticise the presence of Sky in Ireland.
22 If I can just briefly add, Sky has invested over 80 million
23 Euro in Ireland in establishing a digital platform,
24 rendering Ireland the third highest penetration rate of
25 digital TV in Europe after the UK and Spain. It has made
26 that platform available to the Irish terrestrial
27 broadcasters with a dedicated EPG whereby viewers who
28 hitherto were not in a position to receive the Irish
29 channels are now in a position to receive it.

30

1 And lastly, Sky is launching Sky Active at the end of this
2 year whereby a number of third-party content providers,
3 Irish content providers, which we're talking about today,
4 will be in a position to provide their services directly to
5 the Irish consumer. Thank you.

6
7 MR. SNODDY: Thank. Mr. Hetherington, are Sky a threat or
8 not so much of a threat?

9
10 MR. HETHERINGTON: Well Mr. Deering knows the answer since
11 he used to work for me up until a few months ago. The
12 reality is I think that they have hurt RTE more than they
13 have hurt us. They are certainly a factor. They are a
14 significant factor in programming rights. Sky makes
15 a habit of restricting access of programming to the
16 terrestrial broadcasters in Ireland by taking first window.
17 In other words, they don't allow us to run a particular
18 programme that they may licence through a distributor until
19 six months after they have. So, we become kind of the used
20 car lot from a Sky perspective. So there's the revenue
21 side but there's the business side of programming and
22 rights.

23
24 MR. SNODDY: And next door.

25
26 MR. PATTEN: Thank you very much. John Patten, Media Inc
27 yeah representing Channel 4 and E4. I applaud fair
28 comment, I hate unfair comment, and the comment about E4
29 being dumped in Ireland is spectacularly untrue. E4 is
30 available on exactly the same basis in Ireland to cable

1 companies and to Sky as it is in the UK. That is not
2 dumping, it's the same basis. I just thought I would
3 correct that. I am sure there's lots of spin going around
4 and I would be very interested to know who made that
5 particular comment to you?
6

7 MR. SNODDY: Me. No, I made it myself. I can't blame it
8 on anyone else. It was, it seemed to me -- I know it is
9 a full subscription channel in the UK and I thought it
10 seemed, I --
11

12 MR. PATTEN: It's available on basic rate cable packages.
13

14 MR. SNODDY: You see there is a difference, its £5.99
15 a month in the UK and it's a separately charged
16 subscription charge. I was merely, I used the flippant
17 word dumped. I thought I had detected a difference in
18 terms on which E4 was available in the UK to which it is
19 available in Ireland. If I am wrong I certainly apologise,
20 but I am not at all sure I am wholly wrong.
21

22 MR. PATTEN: I think you are wrong and I think if you check
23 you will find out.
24

25 MR. SNODDY: So it costs £5.99 here?
26

27 MR. PATTEN: No, the rates are irrelevant. It is the fact
28 that when you take a basic rate package from NTL you will
29 get E4. If you do the same thing in the UK you'll get it.
30 If you take Telewest you'll get it exactly the same way.



Department of Communications,
Marine and Natural Resources

An Roinn Cumarsáide,
Mara agus Acmhainní Nádurtha

Office of the Minister
Oifig an Aire

Dublin 2
Baile Átha Cliath 2

Tel +353 1 678 2000
LoCall 1890 44 99 00
Fax +353 1 678 2029
Email: minister.ahern@dcmnr.ie
www.dcmnr.gov.ie

Our ref: FOI/50/2004.

Mr. Frank Connolly,
3rd Floor,
Embassy House,
Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4.

10 July 2004

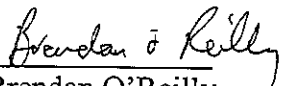
Dear Mr. Connolly,

I refer to the request, which you made to this Department under the Freedom of Information Act. You requested "correspondence between the Department of Communications and the Department of the Taoiseach and the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland on any issue concerning Sky Television, News International or any of publisher Rupert Murdoch's companies over the past five years."

Subsequent to the reply which issued to you on the 09th July, two documents came to light which are relevant to your request and which should have been listed in the schedule of documents you received.

I enclose copies of these records, which I am releasing to you.

Yours sincerely,


Brendan O'Reilly
Broadcasting Policy Division



Communications



Broadcasting



Energy



Marine



Natural Resources



pl file

FAO CORobain B/Casting
 For Observations _____
 For Action _____
 For Follow Up _____
 For Information E.Molloy
 C.C. CCM ; B.Thelby
 Date 22 8/6/04

4 June 2004

Mr Dermot Ahern TD
 Minister for Communications, Marine & Natural Resources
 Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources
 29-31 Adelaide Road
 Dublin 2

Dear Minister Ahern

As I mentioned to you recently, Sky News has an enviable record when it comes to the fairness and impartiality of its coverage.

In over ten years, no fairness or impartiality complaint to any UK regulatory authority (e.g. the ITC, Broadcasting Standards Commission or Ofcom) has been upheld against Sky News. During this time the ITC's annual publication 'Television: The Public's View' has surveyed (among other things) the public's perception of political bias on television and consistently found the public view to be that Sky News is more impartial than the UK public service channels. In February 2004, a *Communicate Research* survey of 201 MPs in the UK rated Sky News' impartiality higher than that of the BBC. Sky News also won the Royal Television Society's award for "News Channel of the Year" for the third time in 2004.

In addition to summarizing this enviable record, it may be helpful if I briefly describe certain regulatory provisions which govern all reporting by Sky News, including its coverage of the imminent local and European elections in Ireland and referendum on Irish citizenship.

As you are aware, all Sky's television services, including Sky News, are regulated by Ofcom under the UK Communications Act. In practice, Ofcom's licensees must comply with, among other things, the standards objectives set out in the Act, which include the requirement that television news is presented with due accuracy and impartiality.

Furthermore, Ofcom's licensees must comply with the Programme Code which sets out certain editorial standards. Section 3.4 deals specifically with news, and states that:

"Reporting should be dispassionate and news judgements based on the need to give viewers an even-handed account of events. In reporting on matters of industrial or political controversy, the main differing views on the matter should be given their due weight in the period during which the controversy is active. Editorial discretion will determine whether a range of conflicting views is included within a single news item or whether it is acceptable to spread them over a series of bulletins."

These obligations apply to all Sky's television services, including Sky News, regardless of where they are viewed. As stated in section 3.1 of the Programme Code, "Licensees transmitting to countries other than the UK should be aware that the due impartiality requirement applies to them no less than to licensees operating solely within the UK."

Sky Ireland

Alexandra House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2
 Telephone 00 353 (0) 1 661 1400 Fax 00 353 (0) 1 661 1402
 www.sky.com
 Vat Registered Number 440627467

In recognition, however, of the specific concerns which have been raised, Sky is willing to confirm that Sky News Ireland's bulletins at 7 p.m. ending at 7.30 p.m. and at 10 p.m. ending at 10.30 p.m. each day for viewers in the Republic of Ireland will comply with the moratorium specified in the "*Coverage restrictions during the Final 24 hours and on Polling Day*" set out in sections 9 of the BCI's Guidelines in respect of the imminent local and European elections in Ireland and the referendum on Irish citizenship. As you will recall, Sky voluntarily complied with such a moratorium in respect of the General Election in Ireland in May 2002.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Deering

Director Sky Ireland

cc Michael O'Keeffe CEO Broadcasting Commission of Ireland

Oifig an Árd Runai
An Roinn Cumarsáide
Mara agus Acmhainní Nádurtha
Baile Átha Cliath 2



Office of the Secretary General
Department of Communications
Marine and Natural Resources
Dublin 2

Email: Brendan.Tuohy@dcmnr.ie
Website: www.dcmnr.ie

Tel: +353-1-678 2030
Fax: +353-1-678 2079

4 June 2004

Mr. Mark Deering
Director
Sky Ireland
1-2 Baggot Court
Baggot Street
Dublin 2

9/14/6

Dear Mark,

Let me firstly congratulate you and Sky Ireland on introducing an Irish news service. Needless to say, we very much welcome this development.

I am also aware that you met with some of my colleagues in the past fortnight to discuss our concerns that the Sky News Irish bulletins should take cognisance of relevant national regulations on broadcast news content. While we realise that it is not a requirement, per se, that Sky comply with Irish regulations, I would hope that you would agree to do so. I am informed that the meeting allowed for a constructive and friendly exchange of views on this important area of public interest.

My colleagues explained the background to our concerns and asked that you make contact with the CEO of the Broadcast Commission of Ireland; Michael O'Keeffe, to clarify what was required by way of detail. I would hope that you share our concern that standards, which are imposed on indigenous broadcasters, particularly in relation to impartiality and fairness, should also apply to Sky and that Sky would avoid leaving itself open to any suggestion that it was slow to comply with the relevant regulations here.

I would again like to thank you for engaging with us and I consider it particularly important that Sky would make their position clear, and be seen to do so, in advance of the impending European and local elections. I would hope that the meeting with Michael O'Keeffe will be fruitful and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Brendan Tuohy
Secretary General