



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

24 March, 2009.

Mr. David Begg,
General Secretary,
Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Dear David,

I am writing to you in the context of the very grave situation which confronts our country at this time. It has, rightly, been described in the recent report of the National Economic and Social Council as a crisis with five dimensions: economic, social, public finance, banking and reputational.

The scale of the challenge which we face is already evident from the very significant reduction in economic activity and the associated sharp rise in unemployment. This in turn is reflected in the very serious fiscal situation. As you know, the Government are preparing to announce further measures on 7th April to address the deteriorating situation.

In that context, and having regard to the potential for further severe impacts on jobs and living standards, there is an overwhelming case for the development of what the NESC called an integrated national response to the complex interplay of domestic and global forces which must be confronted, and for this response to be effective by commanding wide societal ownership.

- 2 -

I believe that the core elements of such a response were outlined in the Framework agreed between the Government and the social partners earlier this year. I have already acknowledged publicly that I see considerable merit in many aspects of the Ten Point Plan put forward by Congress as an elaboration in a number of critical respects of that Framework.

I am satisfied that this shared analysis and our shared objectives provide a strong basis for believing that it would be possible to conclude a National Agreement which would provide a valuable support for the strategic response recommended by the NESC. For that reason, I wish to invite Congress, and the other social partners, to engage as a matter of urgency with the Government in seeking to develop and conclude a National Agreement building on these shared perspectives. I would hope that acceptance of this invitation would enable the Congress to engage immediately in discussion and, accordingly, not to proceed with the planned industrial action on Monday next.

I look forward to a positive response to this invitation.

Yours sincerely,



Brian Cowen, T.D.
Taoiseach