

# St. Patrick's Day

## Celebrating Irishness around the world

Michael D. Higgins  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

I wish to send warm greetings on this St. Patrick's Day to Irish people at home and abroad, and to our wider Irish family around the world.

St. Patrick's Day is an opportunity for the global Irish family, wherever they are living, to joyously acknowledge our shared heritage and culture and to celebrate and make our commitment to an Irishness of which we all can be proud. The life story of St. Patrick is one of perseverance through adversity, generosity overcoming cruelty and a people being transformed through the power of spiritual idealism. Just as St. Patrick brought a vision of hope and renewal to his people, we in our time have our own



"aisling" — our dream of a better, kinder, fairer shared world.

In pursuing this dream, we build on firm foundations and draw from old wisdoms. We Irish are a creative, resourceful, talented and warm people, with

a firm sense of decency and justice. The natural strengths that have built and continue to enhance our reputation include our community spirit, social solidarity, rich culture, humanitarian and peace-keeping work abroad and our powerful bond with the global Irish family. The Irish are a diasporic people and we are both proud of what they have achieved in their adopted homelands and grateful for their continuing commitment to their homeland of birth or origin.

On this day, we think in particular of those Irish men and women who, over recent years, have been separated from their homeland through involuntary emigration. While wishing them happy and fulfilled lives in their new countries, we firmly hope that economic circumstances

will in time allow them to consider returning home to Ireland — to their families and friends who cherish them so dearly.

On St. Patrick's Day, it is our shared culture that is at the heart of our celebrations as we come together to enjoy the best of Irish literature, music, dance and pagantry. The fact that these forms of artistic expression enjoy international appeal enhances our sense of joy and pride. Even more joyful is that, in keeping with the inclusive and generous spirit of St. Patrick, our celebrations accommodate all ages, all communities and all ethnicities. Our love for life and our sense of fun are also constants, as is our core value system that extols pride of place, community cohesion, intergenerational solidarity and an innate spirit of hope and

optimism.

In celebrating our Irishness, we also remember that the Irish are an enterprising and resilient people. While navigating very difficult economic conditions, we refuse to succumb to defeat or fatalism. This indefatigable spirit has in the past ensured our survival and is now a source of our creativity and purpose. It will again be a vital force in regenerating a sustainable economy, securing a fairer and happier society, renewing the republic and making Ireland a country of which we can be even more proud.

All of the Irish and those who are with them, wherever they may be and in whatever circumstances, are in all our thoughts on this day we share with the world. I wish all of you a very happy and peaceful St. Patrick's Day.



Ireland Festival: St. Patrick's Day parades take place in 12 cities in Japan through March 20, including down Omotesando Avenue in Tokyo on March 18. IRISH NETWORK JAPAN

## Ireland thinks green every day as recovery brings key investments

John Neary  
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND

A year has passed since the magnitude 9 earthquake and crippling tsunami struck northeastern Japan. Images remain fresh in our minds of the terrible events that followed that disaster and of the huge challenges they posed for Japan. Those who are still suffering the tragic consequences of the disaster are constantly in our thoughts and prayers.

We have been deeply impressed by the enormous courage and determination shown by the Japanese people in their efforts to recover from this disaster. Their strength and commitment have been an example to the world. The enormous progress that has already been made in the recovery process is a tribute to their efforts.

Last year, most of the events in Japan marking Ireland's national holiday, St. Patrick's Day, were canceled out of respect for the victims of the earthquake. This year, we would like to embark on the various proceedings in a spirit of encouragement and support for the people of Tohoku. We reiterate our continuing solidarity and to wish them a full and speedy recovery.

In Ireland, we are also beginning to see signs of recovery in

our economy and the government is building upon this to deliver long-term, sustainable growth.

Ireland has consistently achieved — or exceeded — all of the targets set in the European Union, European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund program of assistance and we are on track to emerge from the program in 2013 and return to the bond markets.

We are on course to bring the budget deficit below 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2015. We have restructured and recapitalized our banking system. Labor costs have reduced. New initiatives have been launched to boost job creation. The economy returned to growth last year with the balance of payments back in surplus.

This growth has been predominantly export-led with export levels at their highest ever. This is due to improvements in competitiveness and to Ireland's enduring attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment, under-pinned by our 12½ percent corporation tax rate and our place in Europe.

2011 was the most successful year for foreign direct investment into Ireland since 2003. Ireland's dominant sectors of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, information and communication technologies (ICT), Internet/gaming and financial services continue to attract new overseas investment and expansions, including Abbott, Eli Lilly, MasterCard,



Home field: Built on the site of the former Lansdowne Road stadium in Dublin, the Aviva Stadium, opened in May 2010, has a seated capacity of 50,000 and is the main venue for the rugby and soccer national teams. DONAL MURPHY

Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and PayPal. Japanese companies such as Astellas, Fujitsu and Takeda continue to invest and expand in Ireland and 2011 saw The Japan Research Institute (a subsidiary of the Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group) invest in a new software development center in Ireland with the creation of 100 jobs.

Ireland ranks first worldwide in terms of the value of projects and investment it attracts, according to the IBM Global Location Trends Report. The World Bank's "Doing Business" report for 2011 found Ireland to be the most supportive business environment in the euro zone.

Ireland is home to:

- nine of the top 10 global pharmaceutical corporations;
- over 50 percent of the world's leading financial services firms; and
- 10 of the top "born on the Internet" companies.

Ireland's entrepreneurial culture is strong with the support structure among the best available anywhere. Ireland is the perfect location for overseas entrepreneurs to create innovative startups.

Ireland is also a leader in dynamic cultural industries such as animation and digital gaming. We are known for our creative genius and continue to produce outstanding writers, musicians and artists, with Dublin now a UNESCO City of Literature. This year, as Europe's City of Science, Dublin will host the Euroscience Open Forum, Europe's largest general science meeting, in July.

The world turns green on St. Patrick's Day but in Ireland we think green every day. We are investing in green technologies and protecting our natural landscape, which provides the best environment for our food, drink and tourism industries. Ireland has the world's first national beef quality and sustainability assurance scheme accredited to the Carbon Trust (a not-for-profit U.K.-based company with a mission to accelerate the move to a low-carbon economy) and we plan to increase output in sectors such as dairy products by up to 50 percent in the coming decade through sustainable intensification.

Ireland is a knowledge-based economy, built on innovation and competing globally to attract the best research talent. Ireland already ranks in the top 20 nations for the quality of scientific publications overall and is, for example, third in the field of immunology.

As our economy recovers, the value on offer for visitors has increased. This year you can "Jump into Ireland," enjoying wonderful landscapes, warm, friendly people and iconic holidays.

The Gathering Ireland, our biggest ever tourism initiative, will take place throughout 2013, providing an opportunity for those with ancestral links and an affinity for Ireland to play a part in — and benefit from — our economic recovery. The initiative is an invitation to the wider world to connect with the people of Ireland in business, the arts,

sports, communities and public life.

We hope that this will appeal to people in Japan where cultural links with Ireland span all art forms. Traditional Irish music and dance are widely appreciated here and it was my great privilege last December to join the celebrated singer Liam

Ó Maonlaí and Celtic choir Anúna on a tour of some of the areas in northern Japan affected by the earthquake, where they performed for audiences of mostly children. The tour was cosponsored by Ireland-related organizations in Japan including the Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce, and it was a wonderful way of reaching across national and linguistic boundaries to touch people's hearts and express Ireland's solidarity with Japan.

St. Patrick's Day is an Irish cultural phenomenon with a growing profile in Japan and we look forward to a total of 12 parades this year under the umbrella of the Ireland Festival. We invite readers to join any of these events, from Kumamoto to Yokohama, and follow our dedicated Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/IrelandFestivalJapan](http://www.facebook.com/IrelandFestivalJapan)) or that of the Irish Network Japan ([www.inj.or.jp](http://www.inj.or.jp)) for details of how and where to celebrate this fun-filled festival of green!



Legendary band: When the St. Patrick's Day parades are over, Irish cultural events in Japan will continue throughout 2012, including a tour by Irish traditional music group The Chieftains in November and December. PLANKTON



Stunning views: The Cliffs of Moher, reaching a height of 214 meters and stretching 8 km along the Atlantic Ocean, are Ireland's major natural tourist attraction. EMBASSY OF IRELAND

**HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY**

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**Happy Saint Patrick's Day**

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Best Wishes  
on Saint Patrick's Day

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