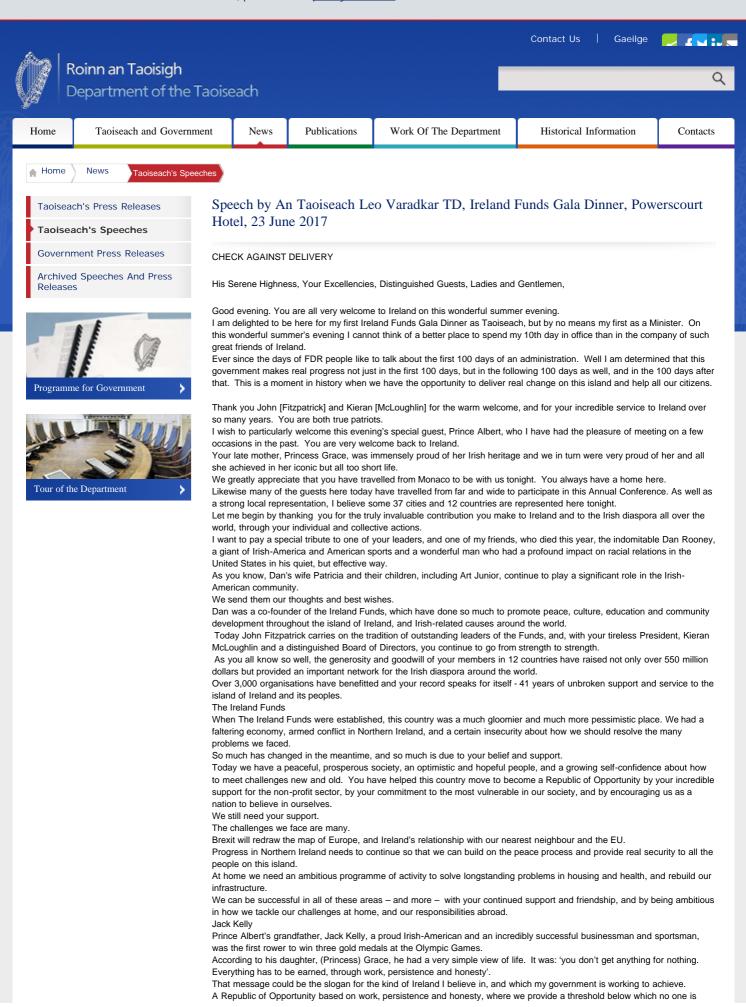
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http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/...s/Taoiseach's_Speeches/Speech_by_An_Taoiseach_Leo_Varadkar_TD_Ireland_Funds_Gala_Dinner_Powerscourt_Hotel_23_June_2017.html[08/08/2017 15:15:25]
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allowed to fall, and enable people to reach their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their families. The United Nations

A little over fifty years ago President Kennedy addressed a joint session of the Irish parliament and reminded us that the achievement of nationhood should not be seen as an end, but only as a beginning. Believing that Ireland had a role to play on the world stage, as the 'protector of the weak and voice of the small', he suggested that this was possible through our involvement with the United Nations.

Back then Ireland was a recent member of the organisation, but was already playing a major role in the Congo and other trouble spots. In the fifty years since, our involvement has grown substantially, and we are respected and trusted around the world as an honest broker and bridge builder.

Now, we want to do more.

I would like Ireland to secure a seat on the UN Security Council, so that we can play an even greater role in international affairs and to achieving 'a world of laws'.

In a time of global uncertainty, rising terrorism, and threats to peace, it is right that we expand our diplomatic footprint overseas.

It is precisely because our forces threaten no one that, in the words of President Kennedy, we can 'help create a world in which no nation is threatened'. Today the world faces threats that even President Kennedy at the height of the cold war could never have imagined.

President Kennedy ended his speech in Dublin on another warm June day by quoting an unnamed 'great Irish poet' who had predicted that when our hour had come we would have something to give to the world. In the 21st century, with peace on this island, an educated people, and a recovering and growing economy, our hour has come, and we want to give something to the world.

Incidentally, that unnamed poet was George William Russell and he was writing those words in a very important year in Irish history - 1916. We were all inspired by the incredible array of commemorative events which took place around the world last year to celebrate the centenary of the Rising.

The Rise of Populism

Russell's essay back then has much that still speaks to us one hundred years on. Russell believed that 'passion had become dominant in our politics', and that it seemed enough for people to vent what they liked or disliked, confusing feelings for thoughts.

Recognising the power of passion, he warned that in national life it was the most dangerous of all guides.

In an era of growing populism around the world, where sometimes people are guided by passion rather than moral and intellectual principle, or are fired up by anger instead of idealism, we need to become better at articulating what it is we believe in, and what we think is worth defending.

The best way of responding to uncritical and seductive populist appeals is not to try and match them, or to ignore them, but to inspire people with something more truthful, more realistic, and more noble. This country's combination 'of hope, confidence and imagination' is needed in the 21st century even more than it was in 1963.

When it comes to idealism that inspires, the Ireland Funds provides a perfect model. You have been our friends and champions, in good times and in bad.

Through your continuing support for Ireland, you have been instrumental in promoting peace, equality and opportunity across the island of Ireland and among Irish communities worldwide.

On a personal note I would like to end by discussing one programme the Ireland Funds sponsors which helped me enormously when I was starting out in my career.

When I was 21 years old I spent a summer on the Washington Ireland Programme, and I learned so much in the office of Congressman Jack Quinn, meeting fellow students, especially those from the North, and so many other people who were committed to public service.

It helped shape the values that would drive me in life -

- encouraging people to reach their potential,
- the importance of hard work,
- the need to support opportunity for all,
- the power of politics to meaningfully change people's lives.

I would never have imagined that seventeen years after my internship I would be elected the prime minister of my country. You helped make that possible. Thank you

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