



## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2011 From the President of Ireland**

I would like to send my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to everyone here in Ireland and to our extended global family across the world.

While we have nearly always tended to think of Christmas as a happy time as families come together to enjoy the festive season, I am also conscious that, for some of you, this year will be a Christmas where unemployment, financial insecurity or the absence of a loved one now living abroad will cast a dark shadow. For many others, it will be a sad time due to illness or family bereavement.

So these are troubling and testing times for so many but while acknowledging the hurt inflicted, the dismay caused, by the mistakes that were made, I also believe that the Irish people have the resilience, the fortitude and the wisdom to move beyond any destructive cynicism and recrimination and have the capacity and determination to move on and craft a new positive form of their Irishness.

It has been truly inspiring for me to witness the innovation and the resourcefulness that have come to the fore in our time of economic need and to see, across this island, communities renewing themselves in social solidarity through co-operation and together showing practical concern for each other and particularly for the less fortunate in this country and, indeed, throughout the world.

While the wider global environment is worrying, we are seeing some positive results in our economic affairs. Our exports continue to grow; many of our companies have become more innovative and competitive; and direct inward investment is robust but the great challenge of creating jobs, reducing unemployment remains.

We Irish also remain a nation of great cultural and sporting achievement, and this continues to enrich our society and enhance our reputation abroad. There is also widespread support for a post-recession future driven by our people's creativity and grounded in a real economy that harnesses our indigenous strengths and adds lasting value to our society.

I am confident that, drawing on our shared strengths and our ethical values, we will rebuild a sustainable and strong economy while also at the same time building a just and inclusive society that ensures the participation of all its citizens.

Ireland is a country and a people moving forward with a common purpose and a shared Aisling of hope and courage; a country that will marry the best of its old wisdom with the new found learning wrought from the chastening experience of recent troubled times.

We are a country of which there is much to be proud; whose possibilities are still to be fully imagined and realised; and whose people I am honoured to serve.

I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year.

Michael D. Higgins  
Uachtarán na hÉireann