

Ahern takes a swipe at Trump policies

FORMER Taoiseach Bertie Ahern has directed a number of verbal swipes at President Donald Trump saying he is living with a view of a world of “dog-eat-dog competition” where power, rather than ethical norms, is the predominant virtue and bilateralism and deal-making is the preferred option.

“His view is that since the rules and obligations of multilateral organisations constrain the United States, these institutions should be ignored, weakened, or disbanded entirely,” Mr Ahern told the second annual Killarney Economic Conference.

The former Fianna Fail leader noted that Trump had withdrawn from the Paris Treaty on Climate Change, initiated trade wars with Canada, Mexico, Turkey, China and the European Union, and blocked the reappointment of judges on the WTO court that arbitrates trade disputes.

“The Trump administration, however, has prepared a 2019 defence budget for this year of US\$716 billion – a substantial increase from the Obama years,” he said.

Mr Ahern said President Trump’s actions to weaken or destroy the architecture of the world’s institutions of global governance was surprising since the United States took the leading part in building most of them and the same could be said for the UK.

“Trump’s scepticism and hostility towards multilateralism and cooperation is not a novelty as the international system has many detractors, both on the left and the right, and his belief in power politics, based on a jaundiced view of human nature certainty, has a long pedigree in international relations,” he stated.

Mr Ahern told the gathering of business and political leaders in the Brehon Hotel, Killarney that institutions like the European Union and United Nations are under attack from the “rising tide of populism and xenophobia”.

President Trump was going down the list of international organisations and “stirring up trouble”.

The former Taoiseach said he noted that Mr Trump’s popularity ratings were dropping and, with that in mind, he would consider canvassing for a good candidate at the next US election but the Democrats would probably damage their chances by running 10 different candidates initially.

On Brexit, Mr Ahern said he would keep an open mind on a second vote but it wouldn’t be a simple task.

“It’s a very dicey scene but, hopefully, there will be some meaningful negotiations,” he said, adding that he has spoken to a number of student groups in the UK and the opinion on Brexit and a second vote was very unclear.