

# **Conflict Resolution, The Irish Experience**

**Roundtable Report**

**Dublin, Ireland**

**15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015**



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Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015

**Session 1: Roundtable Discussion: Conflict Resolution in Ireland: An Overview**



*William Devas, Chief Executive Officer of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, giving participants an overview of the conflict in Ireland.*

With:

**William Devas**, Chief Executive Director of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation

Venue: The Westbury Hotel, Dublin, Ireland

**Catriona Vine:<sup>1</sup>**

Welcome, it is lovely to see you all, we have met many of you before and I know you are all familiar with the Democratic Progress Institute's work so I have no need to elaborate on that, but if you have questions, please feel free to speak to Eleanor or myself.

This activity is part of a series within our Turkey programme, aimed particularly at women. We have had a number of roundtable meetings on this topic, and held our first women only visit to Northern Ireland just over a year ago. This is a follow up visit and I am glad to see that there are some new faces. Hopefully we will have some good discussions on the topics we will cover in the programme.

I would like very much for this visit to be an interactive visit; it is an opportunity to ask lots of questions and discuss the topics we cover at DPI. Do ask questions you have in mind during the sessions.

Mr. Yildiz extends his apologies, he is unable to attend this time as he is travelling unavoidably.

Allow me to now introduce Will Devas,<sup>2</sup> our speaker this evening. He will give an overview, a basic background to the situation in Ireland and the peace process itself, followed by time for questions and answers.

Will is from the Glencree Center for Peace and Reconciliation, which was very important and continues to be important in providing space for groups of people to come and talk and resolve issues relating to conflict resolution. Even after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there continues to be many issues that need to be dealt with. In many ways, the signing the Agreement was the beginning and not the end of the road to peace, which we shall hear more about from Will.

**William Devas:**

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<sup>1</sup> *Catriona Vine is the Deputy Director and Director of Programmes at the Democratic Progress Institute. She has practiced criminal, public and human rights law in the UK and internationally, and has extensive experience working with governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organisations.*

<sup>2</sup> *William Devas is the Chief Executive Officer at Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation which is dedicated to providing leadership and support in practical peace building, and works to transform violent conflict between and within divided communities in Ireland, North and South, and elsewhere.*

Good evening, and welcome to Dublin.

Explaining the conflict is difficult, because the history is 800 - 1000 years old, and there are many different elements to it. The conflict in Ireland is primarily about and takes place in Northern Ireland. Most of the violence happened in a small part of the country. The current situation in Northern Ireland is that you have a power-sharing arrangement between two broad factions: The Republicans/Nationalists/Catholics and the Unionists/Loyalists/Protestants:

FACTION	Republican		Unionists
ALSO CALLED	Nationalists		Loyalists
POLITICAL WING	Sinn Féin (SF) + Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (Non-aligned)	Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) + Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
VIOLENT DIVISION	Irish Republican Army (IRA) / Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) + Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)		Ulster Defence Association (UDA) + Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION (In General)	Catholic		Protestant

The Nationalists and Republicans (in general - this is not universally applicable though) want a united Ireland, while the Unionists and Loyalists want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. The two main parties are Sinn Féin - a Republican party, and the main party of the Nationalists. On the other side, the main party is the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). They are the two biggest parties and they share power.

There is also the Alliance Party, which is in the middle. The Alliance Party formed around 1970, and its aim was indeed to be in the middle. They aim to represent what the majority of people want - whether they want to remain part of the United Kingdom, or whether they want a united Ireland, they'll support that.

In terms of the number of ministers, currently you have the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) with the most seats and most ministers, and Sinn Féin with the second greatest number of seats.

There is a difference between *Republicans* and *Nationalists*: In the past, Republicans have been pro-violence to achieve a united Ireland. Sinn Féin is the political body of the Irish Republican

Army (IRA), which is sometimes also called the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Nationalists were never pro-violence - they aimed to achieve their goal of a united Ireland via political and peaceful means.

On the other hand, the Unionists want to remain part of the United Kingdom. Loyalists are usually working class, and are usually linked with paramilitary organisations who have used violence to try to maintain Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. Again, this is a generalisation, in order to explain things in a basic way.

Hence, when people refer to the paramilitaries or to ex-combatants, they are referring to the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), as well as to the IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA).

There are currently five parties in government together, with no opposition.



*Speaker William Devas from the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation*

About a hundred years ago, in the early 1900s, all of Ireland was part of the UK. There was a movement at that time that was campaigning against the British rule of Ireland. The Protestants were very nervous and worried, and wanted to remain part of the UK. They started bringing in weapons, threatening to fight if an independent parliament was set up for Northern Ireland.

As a response, those in favour of a united Ireland also decided to get weapons, and started getting weapons through the South of Ireland, wanting to fight back.

In 1916, the Easter Rising<sup>3</sup> took place in Dublin, seeking an independent Republic of Ireland. The British who ruled Ireland killed the leaders of the movement, which made it very popular, and led to a war of independence.

In 1921, Northern Ireland came into existence (as a separate entity), creating two countries with minorities: In the South, a Catholic majority and a Protestant minority, and in the North, a Protestant majority and a Catholic minority.

Northern Ireland became very unequal: many people were saying “we want a Protestant country for Protestant people”. Protestants had more jobs, had better education, the police force, which was called the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), was entirely Protestant and would not police very fairly. By the 1960s, Northern Ireland had a very disenfranchised Catholic population, leading to the Civil Rights Movement, which followed the example of Martin Luther King. One of the main demands was “one man, one vote”. This is because if you owned a business, for example, you had two votes, and businesses were almost always owned by Protestants.

From 1922 to 1960, Northern Ireland was ruled by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). It was almost like a one-party state; they won all the elections.

The year 1968 marked the start of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Troubles: Started in 1969, due to many reasons, but mostly relating to power, land, inequality, religion, and poverty, as well as about being Unionists or Nationalists. The Troubles lasted about 45 years, throughout which 3,700 people died and 40,000 were injured. Those numbers are small if you compare them with Rwanda, for example, but everyone in Ireland was highly impacted by these events, and they took place in a very small area.

The Peace Process: In 1994, a ceasefire was declared, as the various factions decided to pursue non-violent methods to end the conflict. The peace talks, however, started before then, with a priest Father Alec Reid<sup>4</sup> holding conversations between Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams and Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) leader John Hume.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Easter Rising, also known as the Easter Rebellion, was an armed uprising led by Irish Republicans, calling for an end to British rule in Ireland, succession from the United Kingdom of Great Britain, and the establishment of an independent Republic of Ireland. It took place throughout key locations in Dublin.*

<sup>4</sup> *Father Alec Reid was an Irish priest and a member of the Redemptorist Order based in West Belfast's Cloned Monastery. He had been close to the Republicans since the start of the Troubles in 1969, and his personal relationship with Gerry Adams led to him becoming an intermediary and mediator between the Republican Movement and a number of other parties to the conflict.*

Bobby Sands<sup>5</sup> died while on hunger strike, just before he was elected to Stormont (the Irish Parliament). That is when the IRA realised that politics was actually a future. So I would argue that the peace process probably started in 1981.

By 1994, there was a political civil society and high level actors were involved in the peace process.

Good Friday Agreement / Belfast Agreement, 1988: A political agreement signed between the UUP, the Alliance Party, the SDLP, Sinn Féin, the Irish Government and the British Government. One significant party that was not part of the Agreement was the DUP, under the leadership of Ian Paisley.<sup>6</sup>

The Agreement had three strands:

- (1) Power sharing: Internally in Northern Ireland.
- (2) North-South: Covering the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- (3) East-West: Covering the relationship between British and Irish governments.

Other important issues were decommissioning (getting rid of weapons), policing and cultural rights (preserving the Irish language, and other cultural and civil rights). The implementation of the Agreement was very difficult, as policing and decommissioning proved to be most challenging. It took over 10 years to implement, and for five of those years there was no parliament in Ireland.

The DUP would not sign until the IRA promised to decommission, an issue which took years and years to resolve, and was only agreed on in 2006. The Republicans were very worried about policing, because the RUC was very vicious. Only in 2010 was it agreed that the police would be controlled by Belfast, and not England.

Today there is a fairly effective parliament, but there are still issues which remain unreasoned, including:

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<sup>5</sup> Bobby Sands was a young IRA member who died as part of a hunger strike at HM Prison Maze, Northern Ireland. He was protesting against the removal of his 'Special Category Status' in prison, which allowed jailed Republicans to be treated under similar conditions of Prisoners of War. His death prompted a surge in activity in favour of the Republican cause.

<sup>6</sup> Reverend Ian Paisley founded the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in 1971, and was its leader from 1971 to 2008. He served as First Minister of Northern Ireland between 8 May 2007 and 5 June 2008.



- Parades: A Unionist-Protestant tradition known as the Orange Order<sup>7</sup> can cause great problems, as it aims to defend Protestant supremacy. Marches and parades are held frequently and are a challenge.
- Flags: Today the Union Jack Flag<sup>8</sup> flies only on 18 days of the year, but it still causes protests and riots.
- The past: 35 years of conflict result in a lot of suffering and pain. People do not feel that they have had justice or truth, and cannot agree on a way to deal with the past.

The Stormont House Agreement<sup>9</sup> made some progress, but we will see in reality whether it will make a difference.

**Q: At the Parliament in Belfast, all parties take part. Is there no threshold requirement for any party to become part of the parliament?**

A: Only five parties have ministers on the Executive, as defined by the Good Friday Agreement. Other parties are too small to get a minister. They may have a seat, but they are not on the Executive, the cabinet. There is a threshold, but I do not know what it is.

The Good Friday Agreement set up power-sharing, and having no opposition was good to create conditions for peace. However, now it creates problems. The Stormont House Agreement talks about setting up an opposition if parties want to, after the next elections in 2016. There may be an opposition then, it could be possible.

**Q: What is the power-sharing structure, is it like the Lebanese model, for example?**

A: This is determined based on the number of seats you have in parliament.

**Q: So there are no fixed seats for particular groups?**

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<sup>7</sup> The Orange Order is a Protestant organisation acting as a brotherhood sworn to defend Protestant supremacy. Its name is a tribute to king William of Orange, the Dutch-born William III who reigned over England, Scotland and Ireland from 1689 to 1702. He is informally known as “King Billy”, and is seen as a champion of the Protestant faith. William’s victory over Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 is still commemorated by The Loyal Orange Institution, more commonly known as the Orange Order.

<sup>8</sup> The Union Jack is the name for the British flag.

<sup>9</sup> Published on 23 December 2014, the Stormont House Agreement is an agreement on key issues that open the way to a more prosperous, stable and secure future for Northern Ireland, as part of the Northern Ireland Office’s policy on supporting political stability and the institutions in Northern Ireland. Full text here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/390672/Stormont\\_House\\_Agreement.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390672/Stormont_House_Agreement.pdf).

A: No, there is no guaranteed number of seats. The DUP and Sinn Féin have the most number of seats. The DUP would fear that the UUP would take away votes from them, or alternately that Sinn Féin would.

**Q: About the flag issue, you said that the Union Flag would fly for 18 days, what is the justification for that?**

A: The flag of the UK used to fly at Belfast City Hall every day. No other building, not even Buckingham Palace, flies the Union Jack every day of the year.

**Q: What is the impact of the EU on this conflict?**

A: The United States played quite a crucial role in the peace process. For Britain and Ireland, being part of the EU was useful, because through EU meetings relationships developed between Ireland and London. Tony Blair<sup>10</sup> and Bertie Ahern, who were both in power for a long time, were able to achieve the Good Friday Agreement. That relationship was cultivated primarily because of joint membership in the EU. What is most important is, if the UK decides to leave the EU, we might then have a border control agreement. This is an important factor in terms of relationships, and could create problems if the UK leaves.

**Q: Is it being discussed that the UK may leave the EU?**

A: Yes, the Conservative party has said that if they win the next elections in May, they will hold a referendum asking whether the UK should stay part of the EU or not. To me, the peace process is ongoing, it is not finished, and so this could create a problem.

**Q: Do people criticise the role played by the US, as an external mediator?**

A: Everyone has a different view, but my sense is that the US has played a positive role. President Bill Clinton upset the British government because he let Gerry Adams visit the USA, but that was a good thing in the end. Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair, who worked for years to make this happen, were supported by Clinton who made it a personal task. Senator George Mitchell has been very well received as well, but of course some people will have criticism.

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<sup>10</sup> Tony Blair served as British Prime Minister from 1997 until 2007.

**Q: Does the Stormont House Agreement address loss among people? Is there any study/practice in order to teach them about loss due to conflict? Are there any psychological programmes available to conflict affected people?**

A: It is mixed - civil society offers therapy and treatment to those who have suffered. It is proving difficult to create a process of societal healing, and not only of individual recovery. There is the initiative of information recovery: previous paramilitaries can come and confess, and it will not be held against them in court. But there is still a need to continue to investigate unsolved crimes. Some people want justice; they want to see perpetrators punished.

**Catriona Vine:**

Thank you very much, Will.

*End of Session*

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

## **Session 2: The Role of the Irish Government**



*Participants at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland*

With:

**Kevin Kelly**, Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

**Emer Deane**, Director of the Anglo-Irish Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

**Helena Keleher**, Deputy Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

**William Devas**, Chief Executive Director of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation

Venue: Iveagh House, Irish Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland,

Dublin, Ireland

Kevin Kelly:<sup>11</sup>

Good morning, *maidin mhaith*,<sup>12</sup> I hope before you leave Ireland, you will have the chance to learn a little bit of Irish. I welcome you all to the beautiful Iveagh House, home to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I understand that you had a meeting yesterday evening, but in effect your first formal meeting is here with the Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs. I welcome you all to Dublin, we are really pleased to welcome you here.



*Speakers Kevin Kelly and Helena Keleher from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland with Catriona Vine, Deputy Director of the Democratic Progress Institute*

My name is Kevin Kelly, I am the Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit (CRU) at the Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and I hope to tell you a little bit about conflict resolution in Ireland. Before that, let me introduce you to my colleagues here. Two more colleagues will join us very shortly, maybe then we can go through the programme. This programme is for you, so I hope the topics we will raise are relevant. I acknowledge the huge amount of experience in the room - I received a briefing from DPI about the delegation and it would be interesting to have time also for discussion.

Emer Deane, Director of the Anglo-Irish Division takes the lead in terms of implementation and follow up on the Good Friday Agreement. She is also the Director of the Reconciliation Fund.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kevin Kelly is the Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, at the Political Division of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>12</sup> "Good Morning" in Irish.

<sup>13</sup> The Reconciliation Fund awards grants to organisations working to build better relations within and between the traditions in Northern Ireland, the North and South, and Ireland and Britain. It is one of the

The plan is that Emer will give an overview, both in terms of the historical perspective on the peace process with Northern Ireland, but also an up-to-date presentation, because she was very involved in the Stormont House Agreement which happened last year (2014).

Helena Keleher, Deputy Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit does lots of things, one of them is take the lead on the women in peace and security agenda. We have given you a copy of our national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

I do not have to introduce you to Will Devas, you all met him last night. I am delighted he could join us today. The purpose of this morning is to give you a governmental perspective, but Will, as Director of Glencree, is one of our closest partners in terms of the supporting role of civil society.

I would like you to consider the meeting as very informal, despite the formal surroundings. Please stop the speaker at any time, ask questions, and hopefully we will have an opportunity for discussion and conversation with you.

Just before I hand over to Emer, I will explain about the Conflict Resolution Unit (CRU). I am new in this role, and you are the first delegation that has come in to meet the CRU in my time. The CRU was set up as part of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in 2008, and at that time the intention of creating the CRU was to build Ireland's expertise. There was a feeling that through our experience in peacemaking, we could contribute in facilitation, as well as in peace building (conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconciliation), through an international cooperation programme. We work mostly in Africa, so we have developed a lot of expertise and experience in working in countries there. Most importantly, though, is what we are doing today - lesson sharing, sharing our experiences from Northern Ireland.

This is also very good time to meet us, we have just, last month, published our foreign policy review for the Foreign Ministry, we call it the Global Island.<sup>14</sup> I mention it because this policy is trying to capture and build on the core values, principles and traditions of Irish policy:

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*funding strategies offered by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. More information at: <https://www.dfa.ie/reconciliation>.*

<sup>14</sup> *The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World is a review of Ireland's external engagement. The review was launched by the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister), Enda Kenny T.D., and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan T.D., at Dublin Castle on 13 January 2015. More information at: <https://www.dfa.ie/our-role-policies/our-work/casestudiesarchive/2015/january/the-global-island/>.*

- Ireland is very neutral and small, but it has a very large outreach in terms of international engagement, and we have a very large diaspora. We are committed to multilateralism, as expressed in our memberships within the European Union and United Nations.
- We have a proud tradition of disarmament and peacekeeping, a strong commitment to human rights, and an international development cooperation, where we have managed to maintain our commitment around international aid, despite tough times. Through it, we also work on strengthening accountability and good governance.
- Above all, which brings us to the work of the CRU, this policy is very much informed of our conflict; the roots and drivers of conflict, and how to build inclusive peace building as a platform for development. Everything you hear this morning is informed by our history of colonisation but also of conflict and peaceful resolution.

There are four main objectives to the CRU:

1. Conflict Prevention: We work with international, regional and multilateral organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), focusing on early warning and dialogue facilitation.
2. Mediation: Ireland is a member of the United Nations group of mediators, and are strong backers of the Mediation Support Unit.<sup>15</sup>
3. An increasingly important agenda for us is women and peace and the security agenda. This is actually a very important element of our overall work, Helena will talk about that.
4. Sharing our experience on peace and reconciliation: I am sure Emer will say it and Will said it last night; we understand that every conflict situation and peace process is *different*, there is no *one* model of reconciliation. Even though we would love to capture in a bottle the experience we had and say “this is the model”, it would be a futile gesture, because there is no one conflict situation that is similar. This would allow us to learn about the experience you have in Turkey, in terms of promoting your own process. However, we do see value in sharing our experience and perspective; there is value to reflecting the things we have learned, good and bad, which will hopefully be useful to interlocutors such as yourselves.

The Democratic Progress Institute have been key partners in our agenda to create new platforms, and capitalise on existing ones, to stimulate discussions that allow different parties to share knowledge, and that is what I hope we will achieve today. The rule is that there are no

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<sup>15</sup> *The Mediation Support Unit was established in 2006 by the United Nations Department of Political Affairs. Among its functions, MSU provides advisory, financial and logistical support to peace processes; works to strengthen the mediation capacity of regional and sub-regional organisations; and serves as a repository of mediation knowledge, policy and guidance, lessons learned and best practices. More information at: [http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/mediation\\_support](http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/mediation_support).*

rules - this is a very relaxed and informal meeting, so please feel free to interrupt at any point. Emer will start.

**Emer Deane:**

Will has given you a brief history, so I do not want to spend too long on the history. What is important is the conflict and our approach to it. Even though Britain and Ireland are very small, there are many different identities, and a new challenge is the increasing recognition of those identities. We have seen Scotland taking a vote on whether it wanted to leave Britain,<sup>16</sup> and this remains a live and complicated matter in Britain and Ireland.

In terms of history, Ireland was under British rule for many years. In 1921, following the War of Independence, Southern Ireland became independent and the remaining six counties in the North remained with the United Kingdom. The reason was that the identity of the people in that part of Ireland differs from the general identity. Those in the North generally identify as British, and come from a Protestant background. It was felt that there would be war if Northern Ireland were to split from the UK.

After the War, the government was not good, it did not treat the Catholic minority well, and this culminated in the late 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement in the US, for example, inspired a similar movement in Northern Ireland, and the actions of the police led to a breakdown in the security situation. In 1968–1969, the police were very brutal in how they put the movement down, leading to grassroots militarism, firstly on the Catholic side. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) had been in existence for many years before that, but had no active campaign until then.

On the other side, the Protestant community felt under attack. There were neighbourhoods where families were forced to move out, houses were being burnt, and the security breakdown forced people to divide according to ethnic groups for safety.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Scottish independence referendum took place on 18 September 2014, asking citizens to vote “Yes” or “No” on the question: “Should Scotland be an independent country?”.*





*Speaker Emer Deane from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland*

**Q: Did people leave their homes because of the security situation, or because they were forcefully being driven out? Are they considered refugees?**

A: There were a number of refugees, there was a Refugee Resettlement Programme<sup>17</sup> as well, but in ‘world terms’ the numbers were small. We do not regard ourselves as having a refugee issue or internally displaced people (IDPs).

Walls were built between communities for protection. “Peace walls” began at the time of the riots and burning in the late 1960/early 1970s, what we call “The Troubles”. The reason we call it that brings us straight into the issue of any conflict - narrative: How to explain what happened? If you ask the IRA, the conflict was a struggle for freedom. The British Government, however, would say they came under terrorist attack, and had to secure their communities. Loyalists would say they were protecting their communities.

Everyone has a different narrative, and it is still that way. You cannot try to create a single narrative; you can find a narrative for peace, but you cannot change the way people perceive their story.

Over the course of the conflict, 3,700 people were killed. On a world scale, perhaps it does not seem very large, but Ireland is a very small place, so the people who killed each other either

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<sup>17</sup> Ireland joined the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) led Resettlement Programme following a Government Decision in November 1998 when it was decided to admit 10 applicants plus their immediate families for resettlement each year (usually about 40 persons per year). The quota was increased to 200 persons per year in June 2005. More information at: <http://integration.ie/website/omi/omiwebv6.nsf/page/resettlement-intro>.

worked together, or lived on the same street, which made it a dirty war, because people knew each other.

That is the conflict, but we are here to talk about the peace process.

First thing, there had to come a point where people wanted peace more than they wanted to win. During the conflict, the IRA and the British government wanted to win. There came a point when most of the key players wanted peace more than they wanted to win. It took us a number of years to get to that point.

The second point: Who was going to talk to the 'terrorists'? There has to be a process, which began with the moderate Nationalists/Catholic politicians, who reached out to the political wing of the IRA and said "let us talk". Moderates reached out to extreme politicians, who began to be persuaded that politics was the way to go.

They now had someone to talk to; they had an indirect dialogue with the IRA. This is something that politicians can bring into the public domain.

**Q: One of the issues that comes up when people compare the Irish to the Kurdish conflict is that in Turkey, the PKK existed first and the political party came afterwards. In Ireland, you had the political party and the IRA came after. Did the political party have the upper hand?**

**A:** In a way, the IRA came first. It was more powerful than the political party, Sinn Féin, which was very small. The dynamic changed during the hunger strikes<sup>18</sup> - even though they were in jail, they stood for election. Prisoners were dying as a result of the hunger strike, which impacted many people. That was the moment when they claimed "we can do this with a ballot box in one hand, and armalite in another."<sup>19</sup> The year 1981 marked this dual policy. By 1994, the IRA were in a ceasefire - it took a 13 year transition from using both.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Hunger Strikes began in 1980 following prisoners' demands to be treated as political prisoners rather than ordinary criminals. This first strike lasted 53 days until it was called off. The second Hunger Strike began in 1981 and was more strategic. Each week, one new prisoner would join the strike. The hope was that as more and more prisoners died from starvation, the government would have no choice but to accept their demands. The leader of the second Hunger Strike was Bobby Sands who began fasting on 1 March 1981. He died after 66 days of striking. The Hunger Strike was formally ended after 217 day on 3 October 3 1981, following the deaths of several other strikers. Although prisoners were granted the right to wear their own clothes, there was no formal acknowledgment by the government that they were political prisoners.*

<sup>19</sup> *The 'Armalite and ballot box' phrase refers to the strategy pursued by some republicans in Ireland during the 1980s and 1990s, where by elections would be contested by political groups such as Sinn Féin (the ballot box), whilst the IRA simultaneously fought an armed struggle (Armalite - An American firearms manufacturer popular with paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland).*

Between 1981 and 1994 - there was dialogue, but after the ceasefire, there could finally be open negotiations. By 1995, Sinn Féin was formally brought into the talks.

**Q: Usually when people compare cases, they argue that it is different because you had Sinn Féin who could influence the IRA, whereas the political party in Turkey is not so strong vis-a-vis the PKK.**

A: Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Féin, has been the same leader since that time. Once you have a ceasefire, the door is open to negotiations. By 1998, we had a comprehensive peace deal, because it got to the point where people realised that it was not about winning, it was about peace. They realised that the conflict was the problem, and not necessarily the other side. In terms of moving towards an agreement, this is where international actors become very important; individuals were now going to have to change. People who had once said “I will never speak to Sinn Féin” were going to have to speak with them.

If you promise something in elections and then change what you said, it causes problems. You need other people who are respected, and usually you need actors to provide support and affirmation, because you are changing the fundamental policy of your party.

For the Irish Government, what was particularly difficult for us was that until 1998, we regarded the whole Republic of Ireland as rightfully ours, and division was perceived as wrong. The big task for the Irish Government was to go to the people to change the constitution and say “we no longer claim the territory of Northern Ireland, we accept that the concept of the people of Northern Ireland will be determined with part of the UK or Northern Ireland.” This is a unique constitutional position for any place in the world - they can vote in or out. Today, if you are born in Northern Ireland, you can have both a British and an Irish citizenship by birth, or choose one.

You have two communities, and when you are in a complex system, you need a complex solution. It has worked in the sense that last year nobody died through sectarian violence or anti-state violence. It worked in the sense that the people of Northern Ireland saw this as a fair compromise, and both identities could keep their rights, views and narrative. But this was only possible because of the international support created for it; the US and the EU always supported this policy, and we could not have done that without their support, we could not have taken these big decisions.

**Catriona Vine:**

Participants have a copy of DPI’s publication on the key aspects of the Good Friday Agreement.

**Q: The hardest part of any peace agreement is to convince the extremists, because you are getting your votes from them. How, during this time, did the political parties in Ireland support the extremists in Northern Ireland? How did it happen, in terms of the discourse?**

A: The parties in the South never supported the paramilitaries and never supported the extreme parties. The Irish parties in the South would have been very critical of the British government, but also of the IRA. So that was never a difficulty; the difficulty was in Northern Ireland.

On the Nationalist side, their communities were completely controlled by paramilitaries. They had no confidence in the official system, and they relied on a terrorist group to control their neighbourhoods.

A: Ireland gained independence in the 1920s, and maintained a link with the Commonwealth.

**Q: Can you please explain whether decommissioning was an issue running up to the Agreement, and whether it was included in the Agreement?**

A: Decommissioning proved to be one of the longest running challenges. The prominent argument is that, when the IRA entered the ceasefire, they were expected to hand their weapons in immediately, which was not going to happen. They needed confidence in peace, so dialogue had to start before decommissioning was complete, *it had to happen that way around*.

An independent monitoring commission was set up to oversee decommissioning,<sup>20</sup> and this continued over a number of years. There were many political difficulties, and many of them concerned the issue of decommissioning.

If you want to end a conflict, you cannot have a loser, you have to find a narrative that allows the conflict to end, and allows the government to say that the weapons have gone, but you cannot say “we have stopped all terrorism”. Both narratives have to be allowed to continue.

**Q: Who was included in the independent monitoring commission?**

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<sup>20</sup> *The Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) was established to oversee the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons in Northern Ireland, as part of the peace process. General John de Chastelain from Canada was appointed Chairman of the Commission from 1997 to 2011 by the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland.*

A: A Canadian, General de Chastelain was its Chairperson, but there was also participation from South Africa and also from Finland.

You also have to think, you can never have *full* confidence in decommissioning, because it is not as if terrorists have a list of weapons. You just have to believe that the vast majority of the weapons have been destroyed. If bombs stop and the shooting stops, and international people verify that the weapons are destroyed,<sup>21</sup> you can take the next step. Anyone who looks for absolute clarity - and there were demands for that - always causes problems. A branch of the terrorist organisation might have kept weapons, but do you stop the entire process in that case?

If you take people's security away, you have to give them different jobs and provide them with a police force they can trust. The current police force in Northern Ireland has very good public support, and very good cooperation with the Irish police, so it is a big success story.

However, policing was a big transition, because most police officers came from the Protestant majority, and they found it difficult to be dismissed. They had colleagues who died, and then they were told they do not have the confidence of Nationalists, and had to start again.

**Q: The problem with the Turkish case is that the perception of international actors is problematic. How would you carry out decommissioning with third parties, as opposed to what happened here?**

A: Maybe it would be better for Turkey to do otherwise, but in decommissioning, Ireland felt it was better to involve international players in order to build confidence. It does not mean this is the only model. For Ireland, both communities feel a close affinity with the United States and Canada; because of immigration for many years, they have a common ground, so these third parties were successful.

**Q: Regarding the problem in Turkey, we have a Wise Persons Committee in each region, and I am the Deputy Manager of the Committee in the South East of Antalya. We have many similarities with the Irish case. This is my second visit, thanks very much for sharing your valuable experience. I would like to thank DPI and you, valuable politicians, and everybody who made a meaningful contribution to the peace process.**

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<sup>21</sup> On 26 September 2005, General de Chastelain, Chairman of the IICD, announced that decommissioning in Northern Ireland was complete.

**What I am trying to understand is how to comment on the matter in my country. In decommissioning did they sometimes use cement to conceal that they are not actually destroying weapons, or did you work on determining the methods of destroying weapons?**

A: Because decommissioning was carried out secretly by an international body, the government did not determine what methods they used. The message backed by the international decommissioning committee was simple: “today we have overseen the destruction of whatever number of weapons.”

**Q: Did you find any contrary evidence?**

A: No. Cement was used in some cases, but none of the sides ever asked that one method be used.

**Q: How did you prevent the replaced Police Force from oppressing the other side this time?**

A: It was agreed at the time of establishment that the police force must have at least 30 per cent of the minority community integrated. The majority community continued to have greater numbers, and still does today, but what was important was that they had a combination, that it was a mixed police force. Before that, it was comprised 99 per cent from one community. Once it is mixed, it works better.

**Q: The Good Friday Agreement did not talk about the unidentified murders and the people who disappeared - did you ignore these cases during the pardoning of the criminals, or are you going to address this now?**

A: At the time of the Good Friday Agreement, there was a prisoner release scheme which claimed that anybody in prison for a conflict-related crime had to serve no more than two years, so the prisoners were released. But there was no amnesty, which meant the police service continued to investigate murders, and while the numbers are small, more people have gone to jail since then, but they would go for 2 years as well.

Having said that, it has long been regarded as the ‘unfinished business’ of Good Friday Agreement - how to deal with the past. At the last round of talks which ended in December [Stormont House Agreement], dealing with the past was the centrepiece. What was agreed was:

1. There would be a new body established to investigate historical crimes, because the police service takes up all its time working on historical cases, leaving no time to police the present. There are maybe 900 cases never yet investigated.
2. Independent Commission for Information Retrieval (ICIR): With the passing of time, most cases will not get a conviction, since the evidence will not be there. Decommissioning also destroyed evidence, for example. There were so many murders that the police did not have the time to investigate. There are lots of reasons as to why, sometimes bad reasons sometimes simple reasons, for why things were not investigated. In cases where an investigation is not possible, information will be retrieved by allowing former terrorists, citizens and police officers to come forward and give information. If the relatives of a victim want to know (and often they know, they just want to hear it formally) how their loved ones died, the Commission will have contact points for each force, anyone who might have relevant information. It will gather that information, and give it to the relatives. That is the idea of this - *information retrieval*, not prosecution, which is completely separate to the investigation branch. That is what all parties in Northern Ireland want; it has come to a point where prosecution is not likely in most cases. Families are getting older, people are dying, and people want closure, they just want to know what happened.

This is very similar to a model used for the special group of people who the IRA murdered and their bodies were never found. A similar commission was established where former IRA people came and gave information, and on that basis more than half of the bodies have been found. The model worked well there, so now it will be implemented on a much broader level for any murder.

**Q:** In Turkey, there is a river in which we have found many bodies, and it is believed that certain politicians ordered the execution of such crimes. General amnesty in our country depends on political will, and unfortunately even to investigate such things was considered a political crime. There are terrorist groups who have become primary actors in the process, and they should be given freedom to equalise the coalition. This time, we should investigate the unidentified murders, which is becoming one of the biggest problems.

How are we going to investigate them and declare general amnesty? Prisoners have been released because of special conditions, but for me, regarding the leader of the PKK, Öcalan<sup>22</sup> - when considering amnesty, you have to cover both sides. This is not a similar situation where we can learn from you; we have the leader of the organisation in prison.

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<sup>22</sup> Abdullah Öcalan is a founding member and leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Following his arrest in 1999, he has been held in prison on Imralı Island, Turkey. In 2012 discussions between Öcalan and the State became public.

I do not know if you have this on your agenda, but what did you do in terms of language? I was told you were not that successful - what do you think about the language issue?

**Q:** I want to ask about reconciliation with the past. We research families who lost children to the conflict, and most of the Kurdish people said they will not accept an apology, that they want a court process. There is a serious demand from the Kurdish side to establish a reconciliation commission.

**A:** In Northern Ireland, no amnesty has been granted - everything is still subject to investigation. What there is not is a reconciliation and justice commission; there is too much of a risk for it to become political, so the approach is much more at a 'family' level. If a family wants information, or special services to access housing and employment, or investigation, it will happen. It was a conscious decision to take the private route and not the public route, because a public approach would not have helped with reconciliation, but would have rather become a fight over narrative and identity. There are victims on both sides.

**A:** Regarding the language issue, the Good Friday Agreement is clear - status is given to the Irish language. The British government had the power to do that at the time, but they did not do it; they did not put the law through, and power was since devolved to the government in Belfast. They cannot put it through the law yet because it is still a political issue. For the Irish people, it is on the list of what they are not happy about.

There are three issues that still need working on: Legacy, narrative, and identity. When the British government did not show leadership on these, it became a big issue. It has become a political issue. Being able to express your identity remains a political matter, and identity issues very much came to the fore in the Stormont House Agreement. The British agree again that the Irish language is to be given official status.

**Q:** Regarding amnesty, especially for the paramilitary groups, how was it possible to protect them? I remember Gerry Adams was suspected of harassment, and probably there are some other important names involved in past crimes. How can you deal with it, in order to avoid the same crisis?

**A:** There is no guarantee that there will be no crisis, but the Irish government's view would be that it is not helpful to arrest someone like Gerry Adams simply because he was affiliated with the IRA, lots of people were in the IRA. If he had committed murder, however, we would have to. There is no great value to arrests on the basis of membership, but if he had committed



murder, he would have to go to jail. Because the murder he is suspected of happened in a particular time frame, he would not just go for two years, he would go for a full term. So that is an ongoing tension.

**Q: There are significant wars close by, so the Kurdish Conflict is of interest for the entire region. There are some groups that feed on such conflicts, there are some groups in Turkey who were in conflict with each other in the past, irreconcilable groups, who are now meeting together to figure out a solution. How did you manage to bring all groups to the table? How did you include the IRA in daily life, what kind of studies did you do?**

A: There are still people who do not support the peace process, particularly small terrorist organisation in Northern Ireland, with versions of “IRA” in their name: The Real IRA, Continuity IRA and so on. These small groups do not have widespread popular support, and no support from Sinn Féin, so they try to attack Sinn Féin and the State, and that will always be the case. The same goes for the Loyalist side; there are still small paramilitary organisations, but they are not significant.

The only death case this year was of one member of a dissident IRA who killed another, so it was internal. We see internal feuding caught up with crime today.

A: Regarding prisoners and the reintegration of paramilitaries, there is a section of the Good Friday Agreement for the reintegration of prisoners, and it has been successful on the Nationalist side because the IRA and Sinn Féin would be very connected with their community. For us, it could be difficult, because if you are funding community groups, you are maybe funding paramilitaries, but on the other side, what is important is to put through laws so that you do not prevent people with a prison record for conflict-related crimes from integrating in society, and that they are not disbarred from employment.

A: Regarding the third point, luckily, in the conflict in Northern Ireland, we did not have geopolitical influences. There were external groups in the US, for example, supporting the IRA, but not to an extent that interfered with the IRA.

A: The September 11 attack in New York, in a strange way, was positive for the Irish peace process. It made it clear for the IRA to go with peace, because they would have lost American support otherwise.

**Q: We have talked about a justice and reconciliation commission, and you said that both parties were concerned because the commission might be partisan. You also talked about**

historical crimes in the police department - how can you prevent them from investigating in a partisan manner?

**Q:** The Good Friday Agreement was rejected by 30 per cent of the population in a referendum, is this 30 per cent formed of radical extremist groups, or other sections of society?

**A:** The idea of a peace and reconciliation commission is not about whether or not it would be partisan, but a question of whether a public initiative would be helpful. The Sinn Féin wanted a peace and reconciliation commission, and would still like to have one, but they are the only party at the moment. If it is not something that the major players want, it would not work.

**A:** Regarding the investigating body - that will be a big question over the next months: Who will work there, for example? There are strong feelings in the Nationalist community that it cannot be the same police officers who policed during the conflict. It might be forces from England and Scotland, as well as from the South, and some younger ones from Northern Ireland who are 'post-peace'.

The 30 per cent that rejected the Good Friday Agreement were not from the mainstream Protestant community. To them, the Agreement meant moving towards a model where they have to share power with former terrorists, which was a difficult thing to agree to. The vast majority support it now.

**William Devas:**

Stopping the violence in the North was the origin of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation; it was a space to get away from the violence, a respite. That changed with the ceasefire in 1994, and Glencree became a lot more involved in dialogue work. When Glencree talk about dialogue, it means 15 - 20 people sitting in a circle, usually from different sides and political origins, it might be former enemies, so there is usually distrust, maybe hatred, and they are facilitated to have a conversation.

The role of Glencree or similar civil society organisations is to facilitate *dialogue*. The skills of facilitation require giving a chance for everyone to be heard, but also providing a chance for everyone to listen. We have done work with politicians and continue to do so, with ex-combatants (state forces, police and so on) victims and survivors, with women whose voice is

often marginalised, with young people and church groups. The conflict had Protestant and Catholic elements to it, so the church played a role in it as well.

A few key lessons I have learned as a civil society actor, having played a small role in the peace process are as follows:

The most important thing we have learned is that you make peace with *people*, with human beings. When in a room with people who do not trust and hate each other, who suffered because of what the other may have done, the human reaction is to consider that person as something else; monsters who oppressed us, or as bigoted. You cannot make peace with monsters; you have to make peace with human beings.

Ultimately, you have to come to terms with the human beings who represent that contested group. And human beings are complicated. That is where dialogue and creating space for people to talk becomes so important.

In terms of the role of civil society in political negotiations, the key thing is to re-humanise relationships; people in the room are humans as well, they have children, have their own basic concerns, and if you can start to help making human connections, then you can make progress on difficult issues. I am biased, but I would argue that civil society, with Glencree being the main actor in the Republic of Ireland, is meant for establishing relationships.

A second thing is, if you are to have political success - and we have had our failures and successes here (St. Andrews, Stormont House) - it needs to be supported by other works happening informally. Back channel work, one-on-one conversations, Father Alec Reid,<sup>23</sup> for example, and organisations such as Glencree, who have helped facilitate discussions under the political discussions. It is unlikely for political discussions to succeed without that.

Glencree's approach has been to target people with influence higher up, but also in touch with what people are saying in their communities. What is discussed in the room can influence the higher level of negotiations. You have to acknowledge that probably no one is neutral. If you play an important role as civil society, you must acknowledge that you are also part of the conflict. If you are to be trusted as the facilitator of dialogue, you have to be honest with yourself. They might be willing to accept that you have your own background, as long as you do not bring that into the room. People do not have to trust other people in the room, but they do

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<sup>23</sup> *Father Alec Reid was an Irish Catholic priest who played a key role in the Northern Ireland peace process acting as a mediator.*

have to trust the facilitators, so be honest in who you are and what is your background, it helps in facilitation. Slowly, people start to trust the other participants, and believe what the others are saying.

Another important aspect to Glencree and the whole peace process is *inclusivity*. Not every key player will be willing to be in the room, and some participants will not be willing for others to be present all the time, but there should not be just two elements; there needs to be three or four elements - all aspects of society. In Haiti for example, they would keep an empty chair in the room, representing the people who were not in the room. This way, you encourage inclusivity with those participating.

During the Good Friday Agreement, one significant party was saying no, and we did not really get the implementation of most of the agreement until they said yes. They came into the room and talked with the 'terrorists', as they called them. That is a lesson from the whole peace process, but it applies to civil society work. However uncomfortable it feels, in the end it is beneficial.

The past, the suffering that has been lived, mainly in Northern Ireland but in England and the Republic of Ireland as well, the trauma is still there. Failure to deal with the past in a comprehensive manner is the main challenge today, that is why the Stormont House Agreement is so important - it discusses how to deal with the past.

Now we are seeing signs that the conflict is becoming inter-generational. People today, who did not experience police brutality, have deep-seated passionate views about what should have happened and what the status of Ireland should be, and so on. Some of them have perhaps started to romanticize, saying, "maybe we should go back to the old ways." There was a hope that those who did not live in The Troubles would be automatically pro-peace, but we realise that this does not happen if you do not help it happen, so we try to get young people talking to older people. The trauma is being inherited - the suffering and political ideologies - and we need to work with that to make significant progress in justice and in dealing with past.

One mistake we made, and we made many mistakes, but I think this particularly has been failing until more recent years: we did not make nearly enough effort to include women. We focused on those who did the fighting or suffered from bombs, but did not make enough effort to include 50 per cent of the population who experienced the Troubles. Now we have a women's programme, because they have been excluded, and they find it helpful to build confidence and have an impact in their own communities. We also make a huge effort to include women voices

in community development initiatives. We always made a point of focusing on the men of violence, and that was not helpful.

**Q: How did the media play a role in conflict resolution? How did the media serve as a tool supporting civil society for example?**

A<sub>1</sub>: We have just started thinking of media. Glencree deliberately tried to avoid media, because to establish trust they had to be confident that the discussion will not be repeated elsewhere. We wanted participants to talk about the nature of the discussion, but not to say “this person said”, or “that person said”. We did not want anyone to approach the media and detail what happened in the room, we absolutely tried to avoid that.

**Kevin Kelly:**

Media was a contested space for a long period of time, and Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act<sup>24</sup> was sort of a censorship which prevented the voices of ‘terrorists’ from being broadcast. It was repealed recently, which opened up the media platform for voices of the IRA.

**Emer Deane:**

Media in Northern Ireland... I mean, media *does* conflict. Peace is ‘boring’, except for the big day of peace. It is difficult to keep people engaged now that the conflict is over, but we still need to normalise relations.

Where we are now:

The North-South cooperation is finally beginning to move.

There are still some concerns:

Post-conflict community control is a serious issue. There are former prisoners and women still being marginalised. Even in post-conflict, former militants still have huge control in their communities, we have probably left too much power in the hands of former militants.

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<sup>24</sup> Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960) grants the Minister for Posts & Telegraphs the authority to issue a Ministerial Order to the government appointed Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) Authority not to broadcast material specified in the written order. During the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1968-1994), censorship was used principally to prevent RTÉ interviews with spokespersons for Sinn Féin and for the IRA. The Section 31 broadcasting ban lapsed on 19 January 1994 because it was not renewed by the Minister for Arts, Culture & the Gaeltacht Michael D. Higgins.

Since you cannot take the best employees for a job, and have to consider the sides of each community, it slows down economic renewal.

The peace process also weakens smaller societies. Smaller parties get pushed out to the edges, because everyone is scared if they do not vote for the big ethnic party, they will not be able to access services and money, or that their community would be disadvantaged.

#### What we learned:

Persistence - you just keep doing it. Keep going back, it is a process. Those three big issues: legacy, identity and narrative - just keep going back because even with time, they all change. A security policy is not a resolution, it manages the conflict, but it does not create peace.

To finish on what Will said about the humanity of the other person - it is almost impossible to see any differences; physically, there is no difference, and even in terms of background most people are mixed, Protestant and Catholic, Irish and English. If you can have conflict with people who are so similar to you, you see that conflict is about failing to recognise the other side's humanity. Differences do not necessarily cause the conflict; rather, it is a lack of respect.

#### **Kevin Kelly:**

We will now address the topic of women, peace and security. We did not just put it on the agenda because we are speaking with a group of women today, we put it on the agenda because it is a topic of importance to us, and it is one we have made most progress in over the past years.

#### **Helena Keleher:**

I am the Deputy Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, and I worked in foreign affairs for eight years. For the past 18 months, my major area of work has been the drafting of Ireland's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.<sup>25</sup> Before I explain what it is, I will explain why we are doing this.

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<sup>25</sup> Available at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/ourwork/empoweringwomen-peaceandsecurity/Irelands-second-National-Action-Plan-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf>.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325,<sup>26</sup> adopted in the year 2000, has an overall aim related to two things in particular:

1. When there is armed conflict, women and girls suffer disproportionately;
2. Sustainable peace is best built with the full participation of women. It may not be necessary to come to a peace agreement, but it is in order to make the peace agreement *lasting* and *implementable*.

The resolution was adopted in 2000, but if you go back to the 1990s, there were human rights movements and a rise in a post-cold war way of looking at human rights policy. Women's groups were very much a part of this: The UN Decade for Women took place between 1975 - 1985, and in the 1990s, there was a whole range of human rights conferences, including the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995,<sup>27</sup> claiming that "women's rights were human rights." Women organisations now had a new international framework.

At the same time, a number of conflicts in the world brought into sharp focus what women suffer in conflict, in Rwanda and the Balkans especially. This increased the International Criminal Court's attention on sexual violence in conflict and violence against women.

In response, women's groups started to campaign that violence against women is a result of inequality, and inequality is a result of the lack of participation of women in societal institutions. One of the most important things the campaign focused on was a resolution to be adopted by the Security Council, which is now a human rights based resolution, so it is not considered a soft issue.

Towards the tenth anniversary of its adoption, however, the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) brought increased international attention to the weak implementation of this binding resolution. To tackle this challenge, UNSCR 1325 was bolstered by six subsequent resolutions starting in 2008 (Resolution 1820) and 2009 (Resolutions 1888 and 1889). This is when you start to see real political will in supporting this resolution. There are seven resolutions in total,<sup>28</sup> with protection and participation of women being the most important issues of these resolutions.

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<sup>26</sup> Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.

<sup>27</sup> Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>.

<sup>28</sup> UNSC Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122.

Eventually, 46 countries adopted national action plans in this area, with Ireland being one of the first to do so.

Why is it important to Ireland? For a number of reasons:

1. Its traditional participation in UN peacekeeping: Ireland has always been a supporter of UN peacekeeping operations, and the Irish Defence Forces as well as the An Garda Síochána<sup>29</sup> are active participants in UN and UN-mandated overseas peace operations. Ireland is currently deployed in seven operations.
2. Its overseas development aid programme, Irish Aid, which is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this year.
3. Its unique experience of post-conflict reconciliation and peace building.

The first National Actions Plan (NAP)<sup>30</sup> expired last year. The first thing to consider, given the civil society roots of the resolution, was consultation with the people who were affected. In 2010, we undertook a cross-learning initiative, involving women from Northern Ireland, Ireland, Liberia and Timor Leste.<sup>31</sup> Also, the national committee was comprised of representatives of state, but also of civil society groups, and they drafted the NAP together.

Another success of the last NAP was monitoring, which produced a mid-term progress report. It is very important that this is not just considered lip service, but that there is a monitoring of implementation.

With public consultation made accessible, it meant that anyone could electronically submit an issue they see as important. A Consultative Group led by an independent Chair was closely involved in the development of this first NAP.<sup>32</sup> The Consultative Group organised a consultative workshop, inviting both women and men to discuss the themes of empowerment, prevention, protection and relief, monitoring and accountability and international developments. So, although it is considered a governmental policy, it was constructed in consultation with the public.

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<sup>29</sup> *The national police service of Ireland.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ireland's National Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325, 2011 - 2014:*

<https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstemedial/ourrolesandpolicies/int-priorities/National-Action-Plan-UNSCR-1325.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> *Report of Cross Learning Process on UNSCR 1325:*

<https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstemedial/newspress/cross-learning-process-report.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> *The Consultative Group of the first National Action Plan was chaired independently by trade unionist and human rights activist, Inez McCormack (1943 - 2013).*



One of the unique aspects of our NAP is that it deals not only with our overseas engagements, which is what most national action plans focus on, but also with domestic actions, addressing the conflict in Northern Ireland as well as women who have migrated to Ireland from conflict-affected zones, who might require further assistance with relief and recovery. That links very well with our foreign policy review, where in 2015, nothing is wholly foreign and nothing is wholly domestic.

The community that drafted this plan was comprised of equal and balanced representation from statutory bodies, civil society and academic experts, health service executives as well as defence forces and general advisors. The idea is that people who do not work in the same policy areas get to share their perspectives.

### Background

Ireland's NAP centres around four pillars:

- 1. Prevention:** Refers to the prevention of conflict, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, and makes four main commitments:
  - a) Continue the implementation of effective training policies on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, human rights, gender equality and international humanitarian law for all relevant Irish staff deployed overseas. Every member of the Irish foreign service deployed overseas undergoes training on gender issues.
  - b) Address the issue of impunity for conflict-related sexual violence in national and international legal systems. Ireland has robust policy on prosecuting gender violence, which is the key to tackling impunity.
  - c) Contribute in a strategic manner to the promotion of peace, stability and security, which is something the Irish plan emphasises in particular.
  - d) Work to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in situations of fragility. The Ireland Ambassador to Bangladesh had a saying about this policy area, which is a really good phrase to remember when there is a focus on gender-based violence: The aim of this is not to make war safe for women, the aim is to eliminate war.
- 2. Empowerment and Participation:** We have fleshed out this pillar the most in this plan, which is mostly related to the development aid programme. The Government of Ireland commits to:
  - a) Implement its commitments relating to the empowerment of women in Ireland's policy for international development, relating to fragile and humanitarian contexts. The second NAP makes sure the development aid programme continues its focus on gender equality, and we spend a great portion of the aid programme's budget on prevention of gender-based violence;

- b) When working with private sector entities, in trade for example, we ensure it reflects women's rights;
- c) Support the empowerment and participation in decision-making of women on the island of Ireland work, including those affected by conflict and community groups in post-conflict reconciliation, given the rise of issues that deal with women;
- d) Increase the participation of women in senior decision-making levels; a wider participation of women in our own department [foreign services], in the police force as well as the Irish defence force. We do not have a mandate to increase female parliamentarians, but we have the ability to influence female participation in general;
- e) Incorporate the Women, Peace and Security agenda as a key theme of engagement with situations of fragility;
- f) Promoting women peace-builders and a gender perspective in peace-building. This is the real challenge - how do you know that, if women participate in constructing a peace deal, it will necessarily be more sustainable? We haven't had enough women to have the statistics to prove it;
- g) Support the engagement of men in advancing gender equality and other initiatives which promote the principles of Women, Peace and Security; a commitment is unique to the Irish NAP. There is no way this agenda could work without including half of population, the men.

**3. Protection, Relief and Recovery:** There are three main commitments under this pillar, which are quite broad:

- a) Work to eliminate the scourge of sexual violence in conflict;
- b) Work to protect women and girls in humanitarian crises, including those crises as a result of conflict;
- c) Support the relief, recovery and rehabilitation of women on the island of Ireland affected by conflict.

**4. Promotion:** Promotion of Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in international, regional and national arenas. We are not very big and we lack resources, but we have the ability to promote and encourage other states to draft their own national action plans. It also allows Ireland to leverage its role in the implementation of the WPS agenda through increased lesson-sharing and building public awareness. Referring back to the question earlier about the role of media - this is the only NAP relating to media and encouraging media to show different aspects of gender in conflict, and not only the victim role.

The Government of Ireland makes commitments under these four pillars, which the implementing body will have to report on. We have four years to implement it, while taking into consideration that the world is very changed since the first resolution was adopted, pre-9/11.

I would like to share three words of caution with you: Be careful not to over-simplify - women are not a minority group, and within that group there are many different types of women. The roles of age, class, disability, and IQ status must be considered.

Regarding the tension between protection and participation: while women's rights should be protected, we should be careful about infantilising women, and categorising them as "women and children".

The last warning is to look at gender as much as we look at women's issues - academically, it can often be seen that in an ethno-national conflict, women's issues are feminised, and the call to arms is a call to masculinity. We do not have the answers to that, but it is important to consider these issues when discussing women and security.

2015 is an important year in terms of UN peace operations and peace building. It marks the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the post-2015 sustainable development goals will be agreed on before the end of this year.

**Kevin Kelly:**

We are almost at the end, but you may have questions. I do not know where Turkey is on this, and whether you are developing your own national action plans.

**Q: How were women affected, specifically? In the Kurdish issue, the gender aspect of the conflict is mostly sexual harassment and there are international documents recognising rape, but the conflict also attacks women in terms of the structural violence they experience, which is not recognised directly.**

**A:** I think what this National Action Plan focuses on is relief and rehabilitation. Emer spoke earlier of the community's control and how ex-combatants have maintained power. That has been our main challenge in working with women's groups. Even though there were no sectarian murders, it does not mean there was not any sectarian violence. When there is a paramilitary, the division between public and private space becomes broken down, families are used to carrying arms at home. As such, we work not just with women's groups, but with male ex-

combatants as well. There certainly were female combatants, but they were more the exception than the rule. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition<sup>33</sup> were absolutely crucial in getting it over the line, but unfortunately what we have seen through implementation is that they become squeezed out from the top. During the conflict, women were very active and worked very hard on a volunteer basis, but post-conflict, when those position were more respected and paid, they were filled by more men.

**Kevin Kelly:**

What the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition shows is that women are also agents of the peace process. The main protagonists were men, very difficult men, but we talked to women who played a part and described their role in terms of facilitation and management, sometimes being very forceful and playing an active role. Their stories are mostly untold. Largely, it is perceived as a conflict of men resolved by men, and the women's role is not properly documented.

**William Devas:**

There was so much discussion about prisoners, because men were at the centre of the process and this is the topic that affected them the most, but one positive aspect of the Good Friday Agreement was the establishment of the Victims Unit.<sup>34</sup> The other thing is, sadly we will find out more about sexual abuse. This will come out, we will find that it was very controlled. Some of it may have happened ad-hoc as well, and it will create an important but messy complication I feel.

**Q: Sexual abuse is hidden because women feel discrimination if they confess. Could religiosity or community pressure be one of the reasons why women do not speak up?**

**William Devas:**

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<sup>33</sup> *The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was a cross community political party in Northern Ireland which ran on a platform of anti-sectarianism.*

<sup>34</sup> *The Victims Unit was established in June 2000 within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) in Northern Ireland, after recognising that the needs of the victims of the conflict had not been addressed. Their role is to raise awareness of, and co-ordinate activity on, issues affecting victims of the Troubles across the devolved administration and throughout Northern Ireland in general. More information at <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality/victims.htm>.*

Fear is a factor; women are scared of their own people, and worst, they feel they are being disloyal to their own group if they do speak up. So we have communities terrorising their own communities.

**Kevin Kelly:**

There is the case of Máiría Cahill<sup>35</sup> who came forward with confessions of sexual violence that were suppressed, and you can tell that the main issue was fear, and not religiosity.

**Q: What is your perspective regarding when to start gender equality education: Do you deal with it from an early age, or are you talking about education for adult males? If you can give an example. So do you have any brothels operated by the state, and how do you deal with this, because it is an important source of violence if it is under the control of the state.**

**A:** In answer to your first question about the education of men, the National Action Plan related to three things: (1) Working with men's groups in Northern Ireland in the context of post-conflict rehabilitation; (2) Our overseas development programme, that deals with gender-based violence, involving adult men; and (3) Encouraging men to be champions of gender equality. A gender equality campaign was launched, the #HeForShe campaign,<sup>36</sup> with actress Emma Watson serving as its spokesperson. It recognises that gender equality affects not just women, but everyone in society.

**Kevin Kelly:**

Over years, the curriculum has become more progressive, and there is an increased focus on civil education, particularly at secondary school level. It is a gradual evolution. Just in the very recent past, we have had a high level governmental minister come out publicly and say that he was gay, and this made big news. The discussion around gender relations is still evolving, but we have made fantastic progress over the last few years.

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<sup>35</sup> *Máiría Cahill, a woman from Belfast, has claimed she was raped by a suspected IRA man when she was a teenager, and that the IRA later helped to cover up the alleged abuse. Five people were prosecuted as a result of her claims, but were later acquitted of all charges, after Ms Cahill withdrew her evidence. However, her story continues to make headlines.*

<sup>36</sup> *Launched in March 2014, the HeForShe campaign is a UN Women's Solidarity Movement for Gender Equality. UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. The campaign website: <http://www.heforshe.org/>.*

I would like to close the meeting and thank you. I hope you agree, but this meeting exceeded my expectations. The questions and engagement shows you are really reflecting on our experience.

Many thanks to you all for joining us.

*End of Session*

**Monday 17th February 2015**

**Lunch hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland**



*His Excellency Turkey Ambassador to Ireland, Necip Egüz.*

Venue: Hugo's Restaurant, Dublin

**Speech given by His Excellency Turkey Ambassador to Ireland, Necip Egüz:<sup>37</sup>**

I am very happy to see such a distinguished group here in Dublin. It is not always possible to be with such a distinguished group that is working on such important subjects as conflict resolution and peace building. I should say that I very much appreciate the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) for its efforts in conflict resolution and peace building with a comparative perspective.

For the last two years, I have had the chance to personally witness the activities of DPI and I can see how important they are for democracy and social peace. I want to thank DPI for inviting such a special group to Ireland, and for its contribution to my country's benefit by means of its activities.

Welcome, and thank you again.

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<sup>37</sup> *His Excellency Necip Egüz has been serving as the Ambassador of Turkey to Ireland since February 2013.*



Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015

### Session 3: The Role of Religious Actors in Conflict Resolution



*Speaker Father Gary Donegan with participants at Boston College*

With:

**Father Gary Donegan**, Parish Priest of the Holy Cross Parish, Ardoyne, Northern Ireland

Venue: Boston College, Dublin, Ireland

**Catriona Vine:**

I would like to introduce Father Gary Donegan.<sup>38</sup> We met Gary previously in Belfast, and he has some very interesting experiences to share with us today.

**Gary Donegan:**

Good afternoon. I am based in North Belfast, what is considered to be the most contentious interface of Northern Ireland, imagine that. The best way I could try to describe the situation that I find myself in is often along a sectarian-religious divide: You have the orange side - the Protestants/Unionists/Loyalists, and you have the green side - the Nationalists/Catholics. It is as if you are taking an orange plate, and placing it on a completely green table.

I belong to the Passionist order, founded by the Italian Paolo Francesco Danei,<sup>39</sup> which is really meant to work in areas of tremendous challenge. It is our mandate to go there, and in Ardoyne, there is a central role of peacemaking, of reconciliation and healing.

I come from a very rural background, but I was not spared from the Troubles, which lasted 40 years. I experienced it in a different way, having lived in a rural community. There was a BBC documentary made about my village called “The Killing Fields”, because so many deaths happened where I came from. Ironically, it was a very united community, more than where I currently live, where Protestant and Catholic neighbours work hand in hand, particularly in agriculture and farming communities, and then during the “mad season”/marching season, which is the most contentious time of the year, people who come from a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist background celebrate the victory of William of Orange, known as “King Billy”. The march goes through a predominantly Catholic area, which causes tensions. In rural areas it is not as contentious because of the shared community.

I just turned 50 last June. When I was first ordained 24 years ago, I was an itinerant preacher; I travelled all over Ireland, and worked with church communities. I was on the road all the time and loved it. Then, in 2000, at a big conference, our boss came over, and I said that we should

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<sup>38</sup> *Father Gary Donegan is the rector of the Passionist Community at the Holy Cross Church in Ardoyne, Northern Ireland. The work of peace and reconciliation has been at the centre of his ministry during this time, through which he facilitates intra and interfaith dialogue in Ireland.*

<sup>39</sup> *Paolo Francesco Danei is better known as Saint Paul of the Cross. He was an Italian mystic and founder of the Passionists, a Roman Catholic religious institute emphasising the Passion of Jesus Christ.*

not be working in parishes, that we should be on the road. Two weeks later, I was sent to a parish.



*Speaker Father Gary Donegan*

I told myself that, if I am going to an area like that and see an injustice that needs to be spoken about, I am going to bring it to the fore. What I did not realise was that on my birthday, 19 June 2001, having just arrived in Belfast, I would witness one of the most difficult phases of the post-peace process of the Good Friday Agreement: The Holy Cross Girls' School blockade.<sup>40</sup> Little girls had to walk out of the “green” section and into the “orange” section in order to get to school. Children were always sacred, unless injured in some accidental incident. But by then, the demographic had changed, and it was a predominantly Protestant area, so they decided to put up a blockade and stop the children from going to school.

My friends and I decided to accompany the children to school. As a result, we were attacked with bricks, stones, and spittle, and this caught the media's attention; CNN, BBC, Fox News, they were all there. The only thing that took us off the international stage was 9/11; suddenly, we went from being the headline news to nothing. The following day, none of the big satellite stations were there to see what was happening.

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<sup>40</sup> Holy Cross is a Catholic primary school for girls, located in the middle of a Protestant area in Ardoyne, the north of Belfast, Northern Ireland. In June 2001, Protestant Loyalists began picketing the school and denying the school girls access to school facilities. The girls and their parents were confronted with sectarian abuse, stones, bricks, fireworks, blast bombs and urine-filled balloons as they made their way to school. The dispute went on till January 2002, and the situation has been mostly quiet since.

On the third day of negotiations, a blast bomb was sent in the direction of the children, and Father Aidan Troy<sup>41</sup> and I were the last to leave the area, so we became heroic characters within one community, but hated figures within the other community. The Loyalists, the militant Protestants, they did not know what to do with us. Even within their own community, they did not know how to react to us. Father Aidan and I stole the militancy out of the situation. There were two or three players in the field, and the church was the weakest of all in terms of influence.

The largest loss of life had taken place within that small square mile of an area - from 1969 to 1998, 99 people died as a result of the violence. At one of the religious conferences I attended in Los Angeles last year, I tried to put it in context - it would be equivalent to 50,000 people killed in LA. Given the small area, it basically affected everybody.

I suppose for many people in the area, the church was very much an anomaly for them - 80 per cent of the people would not practice their faith. During the Troubles, the Church was deemed at best irrelevant, and at worst complicit in its neglect in highlighting the injustices that ultimately gave rise to militancy. Where we come from in Belfast, perception becomes reality. A vacuum was created, and people felt that they had to belong to something, so many took up what is often referred to the cause. No matter how minimal, it allowed them to get involved in "the struggle".

When I first said I wanted to become a priest, I was at school. The principal lined us up and asked us what we wanted to be. The pupil before me wanted to work for his father. Then, he said: "Donegan son, what do you want to be?" I said "a priest". He put 'his hand on my shoulder, and said: "A priest? You would not make an Alter Boy. Some of the girls would make a better priest." That was my reputation. My mother said: "You would not make a fortnight."

In times of doubt and fear, there is a rise in the number of people who take up armed struggle. Security in Northern Ireland just did not exist. One of the things that people realised when Father Aidan and I went there, was that our motivation was not as politicians; we were not glorified humanitarians, our motivation was our vocation. We were helping people because of our faith and beliefs, so it was a pure motive. People were asking, why would these priests even bother? Why would they live under death threats from paramilitaries? I ask it from a different direction: How can you live in an area like that, while you are meant to represent God, and ignore what is happening?

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<sup>41</sup> Father Aidan Troy was the Chairman of the Holy Cross School's Board of Governors. He took an active role in the Holy Cross dispute, walking hand in hand with the school girls and their parents as he led them to school through the Loyalists' protests.

That was not popular within the Church as an institution, but thankfully to Pope Francis, it was enabled. What we were doing was liberation theology. We were putting it into practice, not in South America, not by learning about it in theory, but by practicing it here, in our streets.

The reason I became a priest was because I lost my best friend. It was a bigger shock to me than anyone, so if I were to live with that sacrifice every day, I believe there should be a choice. I am definitely more 'Francis' than 'Benedict' in my theology.

In my work there, I worked with perpetrators and victims alike. In those days, and in the subsequent years since, it has led to many encounters with paramilitaries on both ends of the divide. Sometimes it is simply put by people that this is a religious conflict, but the people who took up arms many times come from a Marxist-Socialist background, and the last place they would find themselves in is a church. So in a sense, for me to get involved with them was an anathema. Some of the people I work with claim to be atheists, so even that shocks people. I like to leave the door open to everybody, that is my policy.

Part of my work there was intervening in a post-conflict situation, where you were decommissioning weapons. They would come in my direction, so you would get an ironic image of a man of peace holding two guns in his hands and carrying a rifle on his back. There is an agreement with the police, so I have immunity in that sense - if weapons and drugs come my direction, they do not ask questions. Many people get abducted, and I have to negotiate their release. For many people, I work in very hard situations. We mainly work with the Protestant churches, but I also work with Humanists, I work with Muslims, with Jewish people, depending on what the need is.

For me, just to sing a couple of songs for Christmas, I have to speak to ex-paramilitaries, dissident paramilitaries, politicians, and policemen in order to arrange it. I have been involved in decommissioning, mediating contentious parades, exposing drugs and so on. Also, a big part of when a conflict stops is dealing with reintegrating the prisoners; when a guy is internationally recognised as a terrorist, and he is used to being carried with an aura in his community, then, because of being imprisoned he suddenly finds it impossible to travel, and on their CV they carry that history with them, making them unemployable. That is part of the work that I do.

Blessed is he among women, and I feel blessed today! Women played a massive role both in conflict and post-conflict, because they were the homemakers, having to bring up children often in very difficult situations. There were also situations where women often had to face a lonely existence; children would say that daddy missed all their Christmases and birthdays, that was

not present at their First Communion, so they had to deal with these questions from their children. Often they were also the bread-bringers.

Often the men would come out of prison with post-traumatic stress disorder, where they would ask for permission to open the door, just because they have been used to it this way. They rely on alcohol as a result, some even commit suicide.

For many people, in the situation when the conflict ended, there was a powerlessness in the sense that, they were once people of influence, either because they were the police, or paramilitary. When the ceasefire took place, that stopped, they could no longer have access to weapons or control. They ended up with a menial job at best, and had met difficulties in relationships. They now had to learn how to live together again. In many of the cases, they were incarcerated for longer than they were married. Initially, powerlessness led them to violence, but when they were released, it humanized them.

One of the issues with them was that in Ireland's patriarchal society, if you take the political parties for example, Sinn Féin would lead the way in terms of women who are actually involved, followed by the Alliance Party. In the mainstream, women would often be a 'token', though.

I met with very powerful and strong women who had to deal with a lot of issues as well, because they had to be subservient to the men. They felt that they had to be more masculine than the men, taking on almost a patriarchal role in that situation.

The big thing was to empower people and give them their own dignity. The community I represented was very much perceived to be a second class community, on its knees. Now it feels like a community of equals. It is very difficult to share that kind of power, and that is where we find most of the work is to be done.

So what role can a religious person play in it? Someone like myself can take risks that other faith-based people cannot. I do not have a significant other, I have no children. By choice, I can put myself in a situation that others cannot; they are limited by reasons that I do not have.

In the lead up to Christmas, the institution, the devolved government within Northern Ireland, was about to collapse. It was not working, people lost confidence in it and in the politicians. Our role was to see how to strengthen that, so a group of people like me and people from other backgrounds (from mental health institutions, from other churches, from unions, businesses and

sporting organisations) decided to do something. What began with the five of us having coffee led to our decision to form a civil group called “Make It Work”.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Gary Mason, who is based in East Belfast, is one of the founders of a project that tries to help former Loyalists and Protestant paramilitaries; it does the same thing I do with Republicans and Nationalists. We try to put pressure on, but also support politicians.

We met with all parties except the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and basically what happened is, Gary Hart was appointed by the United States Secretary of State John Kerry to be the Special Advisor to Northern Ireland. During the talks on the Stormont House Agreement, we put on pressure, and they decided that civic leadership was getting off its knees and taking an active role in the situation. “Make It Work” was saying that no, it is our problem, we *all* have a responsibility. The importance of the role of civil society is widely recognised, and “Make it Work” is engaged with all political parties. Next week they are meeting with the DUP, with the Direct Deputy Minister for the first time. We have taken to a bigger level What Aiden and I did with children, and applying it to society in its entirety.

One year, seven months and four days ago, when the parades were commissioned, we had to make a decision on the contentious parades that take place. It resulted in rioting and a very adverse response from the Unionists/Loyalists/Protestants. Prior to that, the parades happened on our side, and two years ago I even got pneumonia after being hit with water guns. Another layman and I patrol the streets at night to keep the children safe. It is living the Church on the street.

We have also got a joint church initiative, which brought together those who were parading (“orange”) to meet with residents where the parade was actually taking place. You may say to yourself “just let them do it, what is the issue, even if they are doing it only to provoke you.” When you look at the bigger picture, there are almost 4,000 parades that take place, and only half a dozen are contentious - they are the ones causing all of this tension. You might say it is simply a little passage of insignificant distance that they march through, but the problem is in what it actually stands for.

I patrol the streets twice daily, at five in the morning, and two in the evening. There was an incident in 2009, someone tried to attack me, but I stopped him (I used to be a boxer!). However, I could not understand how this could happen. I had to go and find him and put it out in the social media to not harm him. I do not want to harm him - my people would have attacked him. It has never taken place again.

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<sup>42</sup> For the official website of the initiative visit <http://www.makeitwork.today/>.

The big contentious parade in the area is on 12 of July, in the morning, at 8am. Paraders go and spend a whole day, and when they come back, that is where the problem lies, because there is so much alcohol and drugs involved, on both sides of the community. I coined the phrase “Euro Disney for rioting” - you have a water canon, police, rioters, people who are watching, little girls watching and guys who are out to impress the girls. People like me begin work at six A.M to stop the rioting. The media keeps it going, they want to see it happening. The smart phone (internet) has become a curse for me, because people are using it to organise riots.

For the last two years, the Parades Commission said no to the evening parades of the Orange Order march, which prevents them from passing by the stretch of the Crumlin Road that separates Unionist and Nationalist areas. Since 2013, there has been a camp of people called Twaddell, and policing it costs £20,000 a night to protect my parish.

Last July, we historically brought them and the Orange group together. They met on five occasions, with Trevor Douglas as a wingman for the Protestants, and myself for the Catholics. We have been stuck in an impasse since, and that is what led us to establish “Make it Work”.

**Q: During the peace process and the drafting of the Good Friday Agreement, what was the role of the Church?**

A: When the real Troubles were on, there were individual priests and ministers who stepped out of the fold. One man - Father Alec Reid - was one of the architects of the Good Friday Agreement. He goes as far back as Albert Reynolds,<sup>43</sup> and subsequently Bertie Ahern, Tony Blair, John Major,<sup>44</sup> and Bill Clinton who sent a special envoy which did heroic work. Father Alec Reid, when he was not being demonised by the church, the state and everybody else, spoke to Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Féin, and said it must move from a military struggle to a situation of negotiations and political solutions. John Hume<sup>45</sup>, Nobel Peace Prize winner, also took tremendous risks, because he would be demonised by his own party for talking to Gerry Adams or even to that priest [Father Alec Reid]. But they took the risk and participated in the talks. Albert Reynolds came to Belfast secretly and spoke to Alec Reid. John Major met with Tony Blaire, and they contributed to the success of the Agreement. As such, you had the perfect people for the situation: Bertie Ahern, Tony Blair and Bill Clinton.

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<sup>43</sup> *Albert Reynolds is a former Irish politician who twice served as the Taoiseach (Head of Government) of Ireland, firstly in the Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrat coalition secondly in the Fianna Fáil-Labour Party coalition.*

<sup>44</sup> *John Major served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1990 until 1997.*

<sup>45</sup> *John Hume is an Irish political figure who formed the Social Democratic and Labor Party. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 for his lead role in Northern Ireland Peace Process.*



This very simple priest was the architect of the Good Friday Agreement, but at the same time, the very politicians who gave him trouble were fighting to get front row seats at his funeral.

One of the most well known pictures of Father Reid<sup>46</sup> is of him laying over a soldier, his mouth stained with the blood of this soldier, as he was trying to give him the kiss of life. Some of the soldiers have a reputation for promiscuity and today the HIV risk would have been considered before doing that, but he risked his life to give that dying soldier the kiss of life.

When anybody asks about the power of individuals in the process, I refer to people like him and Albert Reynolds. In the field that I work in, they took the risk as individuals, not as an institution. Often, the government and such institutions try to block you, but in reality, these people had the freedom that others did not have.

**Q: Was he opposed by the Catholics?**

A: Any big institution like the Church moves like a tortoise, and he was like a juggernaut; he was liberation theology. He rocked the boat so much that he got crucified for it. In a sense, he was just an ordinary older man, but when I carried his coffin, there was no weight, because it was a privilege to carry. -

When you examine the situation, you find that many of the dissident Republicans and Loyalists were not around when the conflict was at its worst. They were too young, they are post-Good Friday Republicans or Nationalists. What they do is pick easy targets. I condemn violence of all kind, but when an active service of the IRA went out when the Troubles were at their height, these dissidents could not even cross the street, and now they can travel with impunity.

What I noticed of recent times, in particular since Pope Francis was elected, is that the mainstream Church has started to get involved in the social issues. Pope Francis said, do not hide behind the institutions, do not become collectors of antiquities, get out into the street, and smell the sheep - be the shepherd and smell the sheep. Those of you who come from an agricultural background, like myself, know that sheep are often portrayed as fluffy, nice things - but sheep stink. If you are the right shepherd, you are able to smell; you do not sit in church waiting for people to come to you - you go out and seek the people yourself.

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<sup>46</sup> Picture available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/article8528335.ece/alternates/w620/home--mcittrick-rex.jpg>.

Three years ago, the police called me to tell me that the dissidents were intending to smuggle petrol to make Molotov cocktails. So who do I go to? To a man who was once the most wanted man in Ireland. We go and confiscate the petrol from them. It is beyond ridiculous. Reality in Ireland is often worse than perception.

**Q:** I was honoured to meet Pope Francis, we hosted him in Turkey and were deeply impressed. He used a car, an old Renault car, and drove through the traffic. Thank God we managed to keep him safe, we were worried something would happen to him because of the serious threat of terrorism. We carried out individual meetings with all faiths, together with the Muslim sectors, and I personally believe that Catholics and Protestants will do very good things together. I am a lawyer, and I am personally interested in minority rights, particularly for non-Muslim minorities. We have refugees from Syria for example, as well as many Christian people.

**Q:** Regarding the priest you said was called a demon, can you expand? You were taking about demonisation? You are a religious person, a cleric, how can one ignore the killing of the people? How can one ignore the killing, as a Protestant?

**A:** You have got one up on me, having met Pope Francis. Forgetting the pope part, he is a hero in social justice.

Where I used the word “demon”, it is often the term that is used here when you do something different. In the past, in Medieval times, they lived in castles or walled cities, so to put your head outside the top of the wall in order to see what is going on was to take a risk, because you could have been shot. There is a famous saying here, to “put your head above the parapet”. Most people follow the party line; they do not in any way “ruffle the feathers” or “rock the boat”, they just stay as nice, quiet little members. Then there are individual members, like Father Alec Reid, and an equivalent in the Protestant community is Reverend Dr. Gary Mason.<sup>47</sup>

When you take a stance for social justice, for morality - never mind Christianity - it is very easy for you to become demonised, even by the organisation that you belong to. Because I stand up where the riots take place and people see me there, some people say “this priest is a Republican, he is not in the middle, he has decided to take a side.” My parents’ home was bombed on seven different occasions. My sister suffers to this day from shock, as a result of an explosion. My cousin was put in a car with a 1,000 lb. homemade explosive, and was forced to

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<sup>47</sup> *Reverend Dr. Gary Mason is a protestant minister who has been heavily involved in the Northern Ireland peace process negotiations.*

drive the car and park it near a police station. As he drove over the ramp with the car, he thought the bomb went off, and ended up in a mental institution because of the nerves. So in fact, I should be anti-Republican.

But I like to ask: Why did they become militant in the first place? Where was the Church when people rose in a peaceful way? Why did the Church not get in there? Why did it sit on the fence? I love the Church, and I live in an imperfect church with sinners who have done terrible things. I stood outside the church and was called a paedophile. I do not have a child - it kills me not to have a child. I will never know what it is like to hold my own child. When I baptise a child, I have to give that child back.

I do not know if there is another priest in Ireland with a bullet-proof vest!

For me, to live with the sacrifices I have made, it is small in comparison to not having my own child. I did not give that up to sit up and say pious prayers; I gave that up so I can affect things on the ground. If it costs me what it costs them, then I know I did the right thing. I get harassed every night by the Twaddell, as they call me names, but that is the price. Everything has a consequence. I have to say, I was very blessed in the home I came from: a simple, traditional, Irish home. My parents are still with me.

When my baby nephew died after 10 days of being born, and when they took the machines off him, he - his short life, even though it was only 10 days - could make a lasting impression in my life. He was meant to be there.

The other night I was getting oxygen from the hospital, and a little 13 year old boy was admitted. He was involved in an altercation at a football game, and subsequently died. When you are looking at that beautiful, healthy boy, and you see how precious and sacred life is, and how we fight to protect it - if I can make difference to one of those children's lives, then the sacrifice is worth it.

**Catriona Vine:**

Thank you very much indeed Father Gary. We have some names to research, and some useful references from the many things you have shared with us. Thank you very much and have a safe journey back to Belfast.

**Father Gary Donegan:**

It really is a privilege to meet you, and if anytime you are ever in Belfast, look me up, call me.  
We do not get many tourists where I am from.

*End of Session*

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015

#### Session 4: Good Friday Agreement Negotiations



*Participants with speaker Liz O'Donnell at Boston College*

With:

**Liz O'Donnell**, Former Good Friday Agreement Negotiator and Former Minister of State

Venue: Boston College, Dublin, Ireland

**Catriona Vine:**

Welcome back everyone. I would like to thank our next speaker. Some of you remember her from before: Liz O'Donnell is a former Irish Progressive Democrats Politician. She served as TD (member of Parliament) for Dublin South from 1992 - 2007, as well as Deputy Leader of the Party from 2006 - 2007. In 1997, she was appointed to the position of Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, where she was responsible for Overseas Development Assistance and Human Rights; a position she held until 2002, when she was appointed to the position of Minister of State to the Government. Liz was a representative of the Irish Government at the multi-party talks which led to the Good Friday Agreement, and she has a wealth of experience and knowledge in facilitation. Thank you for joining us today Liz

**Liz O'Donnell:**

Good morning. It is good to see some of you again, I recognise some of your faces. I enjoy talking about my involvement in the peace process, it is the most significant work I have done in my 20 years in politics.

Last time we met we spoke of the role of women, which is significant not only because of the gender aspect, but because it was the first time that women were actually represented in cross-community groups, from both communities. It was useful to our discussion and brought a breath of fresh air. Academic thinking injected freshness into the political discourse, which was very stale; people were stuck in their fixed positions for many years.

In the process, we had some very good arches of stability which helped us overcome obstacles. The process started tentatively with small steps from the British and Irish governments, unofficially making outreaches to parallel groups. From the beginning, it was a dangerous business for the governments, because they were dealing with terrorist groups. These groups were called 'terrorist groups', and that is what they were, in effect; they were bombing cities, murdering people, they had a vast arsenal of weapons. It was very courageous and perhaps dangerous of the British and Irish governments to enter such negotiations.

On the other hand, we had good authority from trusted individuals, and the public were generally interested in peaceful negotiations towards reaching a settlement. However, they had not anticipated how complex it may be, and there was fatigue on both sides because of the security threat. Despite ceasefires, there were still bombs, and there was no permanent structure.

When I came to Ireland, there was no ceasefire, but the previous parliament had discussions with Senator George Mitchell, and some references had been made in documents, exploring the possible outline of a potential settlement. Any talk of defined positions would cause a collapse of the talks. But it was a masterpiece of drafting; the document that was finally agreed on was so complex and even devious in its drafting that it was masterful. We managed to address the needs of so many diverse groups.



Speaker Liz O'Donnell

**Q: Who first initiated the call to Senator Mitchell?**

**A:** It was proposed by then US President Bill Clinton.

American involvement in the peace process was very significant; it helped us because the Republican movement, the IRA, had very strong links with the Irish diaspora in America. To a certain extent, the American engagement was very ideological, idealistic, even simplistic in some ways.

When President Clinton appointed Senator Mitchell, it also gave us the learned intelligence of a sophisticated democracy. Mitchell was the leader of the Senate, he used to be a judge, and he was a highly regarded democrat; he brought a high degree of intelligence to the process. He was completely non-partisan, and a very tough Chairman. So when he came to the negotiations, he started building relationships with the various parties and had a great capacity in instilling respect and demanding respect from one side towards the other. What would previously happen was that they would either shout at each other or ignore each other, but he helped overcome that through his experience of being a distinguished politician and judge. The parties felt they

had to behave themselves, and there was a sense of forced civility. Before, they could be rude to each other, walk out, refuse to hand in necessary papers - it was really childish, immature behaviour from politicians.

When I came to the discussion in 1997, there was a new government in place. The first thing that we had was an independent Chairman,<sup>48</sup> and the second thing was that we had two new governments join negotiations, including the Republic of Ireland, my government.

The British government, under Tony Blair, won with a sweep of votes, and the new government in Ireland no longer had to rely on votes by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) in Northern Ireland in the House of Commons, so they had more 'wiggle room' to be more progressive regarding negotiations.

Then we had a ceasefire, after the breakdown of the talks following the Canary Wharf bombing,<sup>49</sup> which meant that we were technically back in business. The deal was that we had to have a ceasefire before negotiations, so the negotiations had to wait, which is what we called a "period of decontamination". At this point, a lot of work happened on documents - we drafted the outline of the agreement, and had the positions worked out. There was a certain feeling from the two governments that we were about a year from an agreement.

There were three strands:

1. Internally within Northern Ireland;
2. North-South relations;
3. East-West relations.

I was involved primarily in Strand 2 relations: between the North of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The first strand was hugely important as well, but it did not involve the Irish government, out of respect for the North. They had to engage without outside interference.

Sinn Féin, the party representing the IRA, came into the negotiations in September. Just as they came in, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) - the biggest party, a big cohort of Unionists - walked out. So we had one big group leaving because they did not want to be in the same

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<sup>48</sup> As part of the Good Friday Agreement, an independent neutral adjudicator was selected to look over the disarmament of Republican and Loyalist paramilitary weapons in Northern Ireland. General John de Chastelain was appointed Chairman of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) from 1997 to 2011 by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland.

<sup>49</sup> The Canary Wharf bombing, also known as the Docklands bombing, refers to the 1996 bombing by the IRA in the Docklands area, one of the financial districts of London, in which two people died and damages cost £100 million. It signalled the end of a 17 month ceasefire.



building with those who they saw as 'terrorists'. Those Unionists who remained in negotiations were always under political pressure from the outside, electorally even, from people who refused to come into the talks. They were the "refusniks", the rejectionists.

There were lots of people who were not ready for negotiations in the population, so on behalf of the government there was a huge amount of suspension of critical expression. They had to force the credibility of the people around the table, and sometimes it had to be stretched. There was still paramilitary activity outside negotiations, but we had to look at things around us and keep going. It allowed the process to have a permanency, to remain unaffected from the difficult events outside. It was an imperfect conflict resolution situation. There were going to be activities, deliberate or otherwise, which were illegal, which were geared to throw off the process of negotiations. But we had to stick to our plan.

It was very important that the relationship between the British and Irish governments was strong, in fact the relationship between the two governments was probably the best ever at that time. They recognised that they could not defeat the IRA by security measures alone, and that was extremely important, especially for the Irish government.

The Irish government moved quicker than the British in release of prisoners, because we saw it as a confidence building measure. It was very controversial; the British government could not deliver that. We had fewer prisoners, and we felt that it was worth the risk. They could still be recaptured if they misbehaved. Prisoners came from both sides, and their release was very crucial to the negotiations.

Very little work was done in a roundtable setting; it was mostly done in bilateral groups. We were slowly working out solutions and overcoming obstacles. People were very nervous about considering the possible options, publicly or even in the big rooms.

Regarding confidentiality - we should have had it, but in reality it was a leaky process, and participants were giving information to journalists. We discovered that the most progressive work was done in bilateral meetings. At no stage in the negotiations did Gerry Adams sit down and talk to the head of his rival party. It was in many ways a proxy facilitation. It was heavily facilitated, with a top-down approach. I do not think the parties would have reached an agreement without the civil service competencies of the official side; they did not have negotiation skills, or the drafting skills of the senior civil servants who were experts at this. They were brilliant at representing their own constituencies, but had no competency to put themselves in the shoes of the other side. Through the process of structured dialogue, they were able to actually learn and listen to the perspective of the other side. They spent their whole

lives articulating their own position, but hardly ever put themselves in the place of the other side.

Polarisation started, with moments of civility and progressive politics, which would then fall into blame and fear. They were competing against each other for votes, so there was huge competition on who could be more radical, or who could be more interesting, and more stoically represent each side. The relationship between the two governments is what kept us on board.

So we had an independent Chairman, a structured process, and thirdly - there was a sort of engagement, to a certain extent, with outside communities and civil society. Although it was satisfactory, and we wished it was better, at that stage, civil society was not that developed in Ireland. Politics was so toxic that it drowned out the civil society. It should have been more of a 'people's process', but you just have to take the situation as you find it. We just had people who hated each other here, and we had to deal with what we had.

It was a very robust political set up, but it lacked harmony. There was a political heaviness, and an emotional one as well, because so much was at stake; so many had been killed. Everyone felt responsible for doing their best, but there were so many agendas in the room, so it was a very stressful process.

The Chairman had a strong team which helped as well. Martha Pope<sup>50</sup> was a senior mediation person, she was the head of his secretariat, and behind the scenes she was very influential. She would bring up ways of overcoming several structural obstacles.

The aim of the Mitchell Principles<sup>51</sup> was to disavow all violence. Senator Mitchell oversaw decommissioning as a *process*, but the parties, the people who had the weapons, they saw it as an *outcome*. They were using weapons as a trading instrument, whereas we were hoping to have decommissioning weapons as *quid pro quo* for negotiations.

The parties and the government could not deliver an agreement on decommissioning until ten years later. We did have a lessening of violence during the negotiations, though. Ironically, the

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<sup>50</sup> Senator Mitchell's senior aide on Northern Ireland issues, which eventually led to the Good Friday Peace Agreement of 1998.

<sup>51</sup> On 22 January 1996, the Report of the International Body on Arms and Decommissioning was released, outlining the six ground rules of the Mitchell Principles, named after US senator George Mitchell, who played a key role in the peace process. They specified that "all involved in negotiations had to affirm their commitment."

biggest bomb of all the Troubles came *after* the peace agreement, in August 1998.<sup>52</sup> It was carried out by a dissident group, however, and not by a party to the Agreement. That could have blown up the whole peace agreement, but we were assured by our security that it was a dissident group, and not caused by the people we had made an arrangement with.

The process was very fallible, it was not perfect. During negotiations, we were always having to overcome difficulties: to persuade people to stay, to accept certain compromises, even to agree on an agenda for discussions. It probably took us a month to agree on a substantive agenda. We had to keep the agenda very flexible, because people did not have the confidence. They could only negotiate as far as they felt their constituencies would allow it. They had to soften the public, and this why much of the process was about hearts and minds. Certain communities were in a better state of mind towards compromise than others.

I would be happy to take any questions you have.

**Q: Was there resistance by any of the parties to the appointment of Senator Mitchell?**

A: This was at the beginning, it happened before our government had come in, in the previous round of negotiations. The Unionist parties were sceptical, they felt that he would automatically side with the Irish Americans, but he quickly put that to rest and proved to be as difficult with the Republicans as he was with the Unionists. He quickly displayed that he was non-partisan; he allowed everyone to talk until they could not anymore. It was painful - it would be two hours on a point of order, impossibly long speeches made by impossible people, but he allowed everybody to talk. He believed that it was better to have them talking than shouting or fighting outside the process. People got to know how to split the truth from the madness, and recognise the people who were serious from the people who were only posturing. If you are mad, with mad ideas, it is clear to everyone around the table that you are not going to contribute to the process at all. We learned who the people of value were: David Ervine<sup>53</sup> was a fantastic member of the Loyalist party; he had killed people, but when serving time in prison he extricated himself and became powerful politically for the benefit of the process. When people come from the extremes, they frequently have greater wisdom or greater urgency than the people who are being paid to be politicians.

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<sup>52</sup> *The Omagh bombing was a car bombing that took place in Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland on 15 August 1998. It was carried out by the Real IRA, an IRA splinter group who opposed the IRA's ceasefire and the Good Friday Agreement.*

<sup>53</sup> *David Ervine was the leader of the Progressive Unionist Party from 2002-2007. He emerged from violent beginnings, as a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force, to become a leading Loyalist figure in the Northern Ireland Peace process.*

Women were also involved, many of them were academics who had studied mediation. We were lucky to have them.

Mitchell was completely anti-violence, he gave very little time to using violence as a way of settling difficulties. There was a big dilemma about the decommissioning of weapons. The view was that the two governments needed a guarantee to know that they were making peace, and that the paramilitaries would not use their arsenals against the state, that there would be an end to the use of illegal weapons. Even if they decommissioned their weapons, they could still buy more. But what Mitchell said was that we should decommission the *mindset* of the people using weapons, and demilitarise the *psychology* of the people and get them to consider the way of politicians rather than violence. It was his biggest contribution: His patience, information sharing and ideology about the psychology of peace and the evolution of people from violence to peace.

**Q: Can you please describe the permanent secretariat?**

A: It was set up by the two governments, and was based in the North. The Irish had a diplomatic mission there, outreaching with parties in Northern Ireland. It dealt with the peace process itself, with Mitchell, his staff, with civil servants from the Northern Irish office, and with the British and Irish governments. We decided as matter of national priority to devote the best people to the process; the best people in foreign affairs, the best diplomats, the best drafters, the best civil servants, were tasked to this. I think this was critical to success. If you have people totally committed and focused on this specific task, it makes a difference. If you look at peace processes in other countries, it is not consistent enough; there is no backing from the Prime Minister's office. In the Irish case, the two Prime Ministers gave their total focus on this one thing - on reaching an agreement.

**Q: We met you in our last meeting as well, and made use of your information in our own country. You spoke of three aspects - East-West relations, North-South relations, and internal Northern Irish affairs, and you said a very important sentence: in Northern Irish relations, you said you did not want any outside intervention.**

A: It was important for the parties. Most of the things were external: we needed a totally new judicial system, an equality system, and a lot of those things were external. There was also a need for a new police force for Northern Ireland, which previously had been made up almost entirely of Protestants. In order to build confidence in the police, we had to introduce a new recruitment drive.

But what I am talking about in relation to internal Northern Ireland, there was not going to be a devolved assembly, to greater extent, before they were going to govern their own affairs. The British used to run several offices, but they had very little understanding of the local scene. The assembly would have new devolved powers, its own cabinet, it would be in charge of justice, security, environmental planning - it is like making a whole new government, so they had to agree on how to share power. It was going to be a forced sharing of power, so it is artificial in that sense. They had to agree to what extent they would organise that. Everything was going to be based on consensus; it was artificial, but tailor-made for our post-conflict society. As democracy settles, and as different parties form, we hope it would be possible for politics to run like in other countries.

**Q: During negotiations, people must have come from various political backgrounds. How did you choose the people? Were they writers/academics? Which kinds of fields did you choose them from? Which main paths did you choose to represent society?**

A: Before negotiations, people had to run for elections. That is how the Women's Coalition formed. If we were to have only the main parties, they would have been too polarised. You had small parties, labour parties, socialists parties, those who would not normally be in the room. So it was artificially rigged so that we had a cross-community number of people, and for the first time the smaller groups had a voice. The dominant parties were the people who shouted the loudest for a long time, and so we decided that it was time that the smaller parties have a say as well. That is how we chose them. Regarding the sort of women they were, they came from community organisations, they were social workers, teachers, academics, nurses and so on.

**Q: Were they representatives of the people?**

A: We were tired of jaded male-dominated politics, and so we decided to let women give a contribution based on their experience, rather than on the fixed positions of ideological parties.

**Q: I looked at the agreement, and I see that there is a part about the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms in Northern Ireland. We were told this was still not implemented because of resistance from society. Why, despite the influential input from the Women's Coalition, was there no gender aspect of transitional justice?**

A: We had elections specifically to allow a diversity of voices, especially to allow women voices, but when the agreement was signed there was no similar arrangement that gave women a presence in the following elections. The small parties, including the Women's Coalition, were excluded by the big parties in the end, because competition politics began to kick in, as it

normally would. So they did not get any extra weighing in the votes. In the elections for the negotiations, women were allowed extra weight to allow them to win the elections, but this was not the case when it came to the normal elections. So the Women's Coalition only lasted for two elections afterwards.

It is also a pity because the smaller Loyalist parties, which are not very sophisticated politically, did not survive after the Agreement either. This was unfortunate, because their voice was not represented after making peace.

**Q: In all peace agreements, women are usually present, but the issues are not spoken of from a gender perspective.**

A: It is not true to say that there was no gender representation, because there are women in the big parties, but the Coalition had a *specific* representative capacity to represent women and gender issues. In Northern Ireland, gender issues are seen as “womany”; ‘proper’ politicians do not talk about gender issues. Also, not all women are feminists.

**Q: You talked about it being a ‘leaky’ process, and we often hear about the need for a process to be transparent. How did you balance the need for transparency with the need for confidentiality?**

A: The talks were secret most of the time. The matters at hand were so volatile, and so many lives were at risk that we could not discuss some of the ideas we were talking about in public; it was too sensitive. I think we were fortunate in that most items were kept under wraps until the Agreement was finally unveiled. This goes back to the three strands; when it all came together, it looked unbelievably ambitious. We had dealt with things in segments, but when it came together, it looked like a total remaking of Northern Irish society, it was an ambitious plan. We were not as euphoric as the wider public because we knew it was only the beginning. There was so much that was still unfinished, uncertain, and vague, such as decommissioning, the Patten Commission<sup>54</sup> and the reorganisation of the police force (which was so complex that it had to be dealt with by a separate commission), the release of prisoners and the conditions under which people would be released, the gravity of their crimes and to what extent they could be retaken as prisoners. Canadian General John de Chastelain oversaw that process, the very technical security considerations.

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<sup>54</sup> Established in 1998 as part of the Good Friday Agreement, the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland was better known as the Patten Commission, as it was chaired by Conservative politician Chris Patten. The Commission was a major step in the Northern Ireland peace process.

The British would close down border crossings, and then there were people who were on the run, they were still technically 'terrorists' on the run. How were they to be dealt with? Forgiven? Granted amnesty? There are so many complex issues yet to be sorted, and those of us who signed the Agreement knew that. Everyone was rejoicing, but we knew that there was so much trouble ahead, so many difficult goals to achieve.

The biggest atrocity came after the Agreement, so there were those who did not agree with the Agreement who were still posing a security risk. There was one view that believed weapons should be given up only when everything was achieved. The refusal to hand over weapons caused the loss of support of the Unionists, who felt they agreed to so many changes, and yet the Nationalists could still have weapons, they asked - "How can we trust these people?!" They were always conditional really, and I think that is fair. I do not think you can expect people to share power when others have arms under the table. You cannot have democracy with paramilitaries. So the situation was not perfect, but it was certainly preferable.

The Agreement was ratified in a referendum and, on the same day, the people of Northern Ireland and the people of the Republic of Ireland voted to accept the Agreement, so the decision was given to the people. It removed the territorial claim on Northern Ireland, which was extraordinary. In the context of peace, however, it was fair, because we were not giving it up in perpetuity. It would be achieved in consent with the people of Northern Ireland; you cannot force a million Protestant people with British allegiance into a jurisdiction or politics they do not identify with. The Agreement was to share Ireland with people of different allegiances, and this democratic mandate gave it huge authority.

In Ireland it was supported by 93 per cent of the population, although less so in the North. In the North, it was more complicated - the DUP objected, so there was still political opposition in Northern Ireland, and it was not carried out in the same numbers as the rest of Ireland.

**Q: The Agreement was not transparent, up until it was signed. On the other hand, the public knew that negotiations were going on and were curious. What did you say to them? To what extent could you give information, in order to keep their hope alive while not negatively affecting negotiations?**

**A:** It was like turning the ship around without frightening the passengers. Every day we would talk to the cameras and say very little: "we are working very hard to come to an agreement," and "the parties are cooperating with each other." We became experts at '*constructive ambiguity*'. Everybody knew, but the governments were also under pressure not to be ceding too much ground and not to make concessions without anything coming back. In fairness to the

media, the media helped us, there was lots of support in the media for the process. People who were closely following the process were allies to the whole thing. There was an understanding that people did not scandalise or blow things out of proportion.

**Q: I am an academic, so my questions comes from academic literature. Pre-negotiations, it is established that there should be complete secrecy, and the negotiation stage is marked with transparency and coming up with a timetable. There is importance in the setting up of the agenda, and the big discussion in Turkey is in terms of coming up with a timetable. How did it work with the Irish case? Did the parties obey a timetable?**

A: Mitchell was flexible in allowing people to talk, so for the first three months not a lot was achieved. People were just getting to know one another. The architecture of our meeting was important as well, they were not in big government buildings, but in pokey administrative offices, so we could not avoid meeting people; people who had never shaken hands suddenly had to pass coffee to each other! It was the gradual breaking down of fractured human relations. Mitchell did have a deadline, he set it to Easter. He had a new baby, a new wife, and he had spent already three or four years in Northern Ireland, so he himself had an internal clock. Because he felt that there had been enough talking, there was nothing that time could give to contribute to a fairly settled proposal. So he made a call. I think that was his judicial training, he was used to endless discussions in the sessions. He said: "it is not about time, it is about making a commitment."

People did not actually sign that day, the only thing that was signed was the British-Irish Agreement.<sup>55</sup> But he basically sought assent around the table. Most parties still had to get an agreement from their party membership, to get endorsement, so they agreed provisionally. I think it was good not to insist on making the parties sign that day. It had to be mandated in a referendum as well, so it was all quite carefully constructed so as to not frighten people away. We had to facilitate people with their difficulties. The Unionist party mainly had difficulties, because the main opposition to them was outside the discussions. What was interesting was the people who took the risks for peace, the people who signed the agreement; they did not do so well politically in the ten years after Agreement, because extremists still managed to get more votes. So today the DUP, who did not sign the Agreement, is strongest in parliament, and the UUP is not strong at all. History will be better than politics, though. People do not automatically vote for peacemakers, they vote for people who articulate their views the strongest.

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<sup>55</sup> *The British-Irish Agreement constitutes one of the documents that make up the Good Friday Agreement. It is an international agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Government of Ireland. The Agreement was signed on 10 April 1998, and came into force on 2 December 1999.*



**Q: Did each item on the agenda have a particular deadline?**

A: No, the general rule was that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. It was a bit frustrating, because it caused endless procrastination. We never knew really if we were making progress, because people were not signing. I do not think it was very helpful, but it worked out.

**Q: What was your way of dealing with crises during the Agreement? Were there psychological management methods that you used?**

A: The Omagh bombing<sup>56</sup> was particularly bad, because Northern Ireland had been assuaged into peace, people’s guard was down. What was horrific about this bomb was that people had an internal sense of peace, so everybody was completely shocked, it caught them without warning, and so many civilians and children were killed. It was obvious that it was a breakaway group making their presence felt. It was extremely depressing. We felt that maybe we had made a mistake, maybe we will be dragged into war again after everything we have been through with negotiations and moving things forward. With that particular bomb, what was important was that the IRA distanced themselves from that, and we had to trust them. They did not help with catching the people, and the biggest danger was that you would have a split in the movement, because then you would still have terrorism. Fortunately the dissident element was small, it had no political mandate, and could be handled by security forces. They are watched all the time, some of them are in prison, and it seems that they do not get much support in the community, as opposed to the IRA which previously did. They are isolated, radical groups, and the authorities, in cooperation with the public in Northern Ireland and the UK, are in constant surveillance, so their plans are many times foiled in advance through intelligence. They have not made big headway since Omagh.

**Q: What was the most difficult item to discuss?**

A: Ironically, the release of prisoners, because we were unravelling justice. These were people convicted of murder, mass murder, killing of families, and were in jail for it. The victims of these people were horrified, they felt that the cost was too high. It was a big sacrifice for the families to make, but it was on both sides. As controversial as the early release of prisoners was in Ireland, probably the most difficult thing to achieve was the decommissioning of weapons.

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<sup>56</sup> *The Omagh bombing was a car bombing that took place on the 15 August 1998 in Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. The bombing was reportedly carried out by the ‘Real IRA’, an IRA splinter group which opposed the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process. The attack was the single deadliest atrocity that took place during the Troubles.*

**Q: Did the government do anything in order to bring relief to people who lost their relatives, and convince people that this has necessary? Or did it abandon them?**

A: There was a special commission set up to look into the needs of the victims. There were still bodies that had never been discovered, and a special commission was set up to find those bodies.<sup>57</sup> In dealing with victims - how do you best deal with them? And how do you determine who is a victim? Some of the families of the paramilitaries also feel victimised, for example. Some are actual soldiers, would they be seen as victims? This is all unfinished business. We did not have a truth and reconciliation process here as in South Africa, but there is still talk of having something. Richard Haass<sup>58</sup> spent over six months, him and a colleague from Harvard, in trying to provide a set of proposals on how to deal with the past, in all its propensity. There is still a lot of unrest, about the flag, about which flag should be flown - that has been very controversial. Over the last two years in particular there is a big issue over the flying of the flag. There are riots on the streets and people get injured. Symbols of allegiance are extremely important, perhaps we did not spend enough time on them.

Northern Ireland is very small, there are only 1.5 million people, so every family has had an impact from the violence. There are many broken people - mental breakdowns, suicides, alcoholism; many people were left damaged from conflict.

**Q: It is a part of the Agreement that ex-prisoners would be re-incarcerated if they continue committing crimes. What percentage of those who were involved in political violence were convicted again?**

A: A very small percentage. If they reoffended, they could be rearrested, but they would be arrested only for three years, so there was still an effort for reconciliation. By and large, when these people came out of prison, they returned to their lives or became involved in politics. It was less advanced on the Unionist side than on the Republican side; we still have a lot of Loyalist unrest and lawbreaking, and agitation politically. They do not feel that the peace

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<sup>57</sup> *The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) was established by treaty between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Government of Ireland, made on 27 April 1999. The undiscovered bodies of victims are colloquially referred to as "The Disappeared", and the Commission was created to locate their remains.*

<sup>58</sup> *Succeeding George Mitchell, Richard Haass was the United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland from 2001 until 2003. He returned to Northern Ireland in 2013 to chair the inter-party talks which aimed to resolve outstanding issues from the peace process. The Haass Talks were conducted over several months and covered such issues as flags and emblems, parades and the legacy of the Troubles. Although a final agreement was not made during the Haass Talks, several draft agreements were worked on. On 31 December 2013, the talks broke up without reaching an agreement.*

process has been so good for them as it was for the other side. Previously, they would have guaranteed jobs, but now, with equality, they have been 'equalised down'. There is more unrest on the Protestant side than on the Republican side. It seems there is a rising success on the nationalist side, to do with education and good political representation from Sinn Féin and nationalist parties.

**Q: In South Africa, those who took arms came from lower classes, so when they were disarmed they had difficulty finding a side.**

A: This is the case on the Loyalist side, less so on the Republican side. There is less political organisation on the Loyalist side, and it has not evolved well into politics from paramilitarism.

**Catriona Vine:**

Thank you for presenting this valuable information, I am sure it will be trickling back through various avenues in Turkey, and thank you very much for joining us today.

*End of Session*

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015

**Session five: Good Friday Agreement Negotiations**



*Participants with Former Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern at the Skylon Hotel, Drumcondra*

With:

**Bertie Ahern**, Former *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister of Ireland)

Venue: The Skylon Hotel, Drumcondra, Dublin, Ireland

**Catriona Vine:**

Good morning everyone. I think our next speaker needs very little introduction from me. You have heard lots about him, in terms of his role in bringing the Good Friday Agreement to its conclusion in 1998. The fact is that relations between Mr. Ahern and Tony Blair were crucial in providing the environment in which agreement could be reached. The Good Friday Agreement, many would say, is one of Mr. Ahern's finest achievements. He served as Prime Minister from June 1997 to May 2008. His political party was the Irish Fianna Fáil, or the Republican Party in English, and he led three coalition governments. In 2003, he was awarded the Thomas J Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights for his work on the Good Friday Agreement and his role in the peace process.

**Bertie Ahern:**

Good afternoon to you all, it is good to see you, good to see the ladies take over this process. Last time I met some of your people, and they were all guys. Maybe I will try to fill you in just a bit about the Good Friday Agreement first, although I am sure you have read about it.

If you look back to Irish history, it has always been traumatic - we have probably spent 700-800 years through conflicts. Over time, we would make a little bit of progress, but then take two steps backwards. That has continued right through our history, which was by and large a very violent history. We would like to think of Ireland as a nice place, but our history has always been traumatic.

There have been a number of attempts made, a lot of negotiations with the British, through different countries, to try to find resolution. Some of them were good efforts, but none got us anywhere. In 1920, there was a prolonged effort: talks were held in London with Lloyd George<sup>59</sup> and an Irish delegation, but ultimately these failed too and led to civil war. That really was a sad period because there was no opportunity for a long, long time afterwards to try to make progress again. During the Second World War, there was a bit of an effort again to make peace, but all the time, when Churchill was there during the Second World War, he was quite favourable to the Unionists, so no effort was made again. Then it went on to the 1940s and 1950s, where there was an IRA campaign in the North, which ended in 1962. Then the Civil Rights Movement was happening around the world, with the Catholics protesting about housing

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<sup>59</sup> *David Lloyd George was a Liberal politician, and leader of the Liberal Party, who served Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1916 - 1922. He also oversaw the partitioning of Ireland which led to separation of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland.*

conditions and education, and inequalities of almost all kinds. The majority ruled the election process and controlled the North for a long time. The Civil Rights Movement was a peaceful attempt to follow up what was happening in many places in the 1960s.

From 1968 onwards, the conflict effectively started. Then we had the Troubles and violence all through the 1970s. It was a very violent period; there were British troops in huge amounts, also the police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), was a huge movement. Then there was also a stand in, temporary movement of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR),<sup>60</sup> so there were about 50,000 paid security people on the streets through the 1970s. Not much happened in terms of negotiations in the 1970s, apart from the Sunningdale Agreement,<sup>61</sup> where the Irish government made an attempt to make a deal. The important thing about these deals is that they did not involve the people who were involved in the violence. Sometimes you do not get anywhere if you are just talking to yourself. So in 1974 they made a deal, not a bad deal; it was a power sharing deal between the Nationalists and the Unionists. Some of the Unionists were outside of the deal because they did not support it, but ultimately the sides brought it down very quickly - it collapsed very quickly.

Nothing happened for about ten years. The violence continued, there were bombings, shootings, murders, they were blowing up anything that got in the way. That continued on, and then in 1985 the next attempt for negotiations was made, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and there was an effort to make an agreement between the governments. Some people believed this was a very good attempt at an agreement. Just for the record, I think it was useless. Again, the problem with it was that the governments were involved; very few of the political parties were consulted, and it had little to do with the ordinary people. While diplomats try to point it out as a breakthrough agreement, when I came into the talks later on, they could not even mention the name of that agreement. It was called the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, although in my view it was more of a propaganda move than an agreement.

So from 1985 onwards, the violence continued, and in 1991, six years on, we started another effort on the talks, with the Irish government role led by John Wilson.<sup>62</sup> My party was not in power these days, so I was not directly involved in the talks, but that was an attempt to really

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<sup>60</sup> *The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was the largest infantry regiment of the British Army, active from 1970 to 1992. It was formed following the civil unrest of the 1960s in Northern Ireland.*

<sup>61</sup> *The Sunningdale Agreement was signed on 9 December 1972 by the British and Irish Governments, and the parties involved in the Northern Ireland executive. It attempted to establish a power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive and a cross-border Council of Ireland. Unionist opposition, violence and a Loyalist general strike caused the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement in May 1974.*

<sup>62</sup> *John Patrick Wilson was an Irish Fianna Fáil politician (the Republican Party). He was first elected as a Teachta Dála (TD) (Member of Parliament) and served in various posts at the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) until 1992.*

get everybody around the table. They realised that the previous agreement had not worked, so they should at least get everyone around the table to state their positions. That was a good effort, because they got everybody to turn up to those talks, even though they did not really get anywhere. Even if you get people to get their position down on paper, and think and talk about the things they have never thought about, it is a good idea. Those 1991-1992 talks were useful. They never came to an agreement, but that was not the point - they did a useful job.

Then in 1994, the then-Prime Minister of Ireland, Albert Reynolds, started talking to the right people: the people involved in the violence on all sides. The talks were mainly secret, they started in 1980s, but were slow. In 1994, there was an attempt made to put all of the talks into one document, and try to write a document that was fair to all sides, based on the position papers written in the 1991-1992 talks. This document was called the Downing Street Declaration.<sup>63</sup> Some of the people involved were church leaders, some academics, others politicians - they all contributed to that document, so it was a 'watershed' document. It was used to help get the ceasefire in place in August 1994. The IRA declared a ceasefire, and then in October 1994 the Loyalists declared a ceasefire. That should have been a major breakthrough, a lot of progress was made.

The "Way Forward" Document came next, it was ready in the printers, but the governments were removed and new governments came in. John Major was helpful, but he needed the support of the Unionists. A debate started - was the ceasefire permanent? Was it going to last forever? Were the IRA going to hand in their guns? The debate lasted through to 1995, and that delayed everything. It is not that they were asking unreasonable questions, but the IRA, after years of fighting, had just agreed to a ceasefire, so to expect them to hand in their guns immediately - even if they *did* want to do it (which they did not) - was impossible.

The ceasefire collapsed in January 1996, and violence started again. This was when the IRA bombed London [Canary Wharf bombing], which did enormous damage. Fortunately, only two people were killed, but it could have been far worse. So in 1996, when we were in opposition, during all of this period I was talking to Sinn Féin and the other parties, and we were waiting for elections to come. I was having lots of negotiations with Tony Blair, and in the summer of 1997, we had worked out that if we were elected, we would make a big effort in the first year of our term to get the ceasefire back on track. Our task would be to set out terms to move into proper talks with all of the parties. In the summer of 1997, we were both elected and started working

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<sup>63</sup> *The Downing Street Declaration was a joint declaration issued on 15 December 1993 at the British Prime Minister's office in 10 Downing Street. It affirmed both the right of the people of Ireland to self-determination, and that Northern Ireland would be transferred to the Republic of Ireland from the United Kingdom if and only if a majority of its population was in favour of such a move.*

immediately on a ceasefire. Tony Blair went to Northern Ireland and made a speech. My job was to convince the IRA to go back to a ceasefire again, which we did.

We started multi-party talks, facilitated by George Mitchell. Talks were held five days a week. There was quite a lot of violence in the North, which created a huge amount of mistrust, and there was retaliation in the talks. The talks went on nearly non-stop from September to April. The deadline was set to finish the talks on the Thursday of that week, and we finally finished on a Friday. They were known as the Multi-Party Talks, because all the parties were in, except for one, that of Ian Paisley.<sup>64</sup>

Like all talks, they were difficult, there were ups and down, but Tony Blair and I decided it was better to continue. Because the conflict was so long and violent, we made the agreement as comprehensive as possible, we tried to cover everything we could. It was not possible to sign off fully, but at least we set out a roadmap for all issues: reform to policing, to the justice system, prisoners (we decided to let them out on licence), institutions. What was the new assembly going to be, and how were people going to be elected? How were we going to share power between the Catholics and the Protestants? Ultimately, the way we did that was through a system called D'Hondt.<sup>65</sup> You got seats in the Assembly, and then the executive was the body that effectively governed.



*Bertie Ahern, Former Taoiseach of Ireland and Chief Negotiator in the Good Friday Agreement.*

I think in terms of agreements, it is my view that the best negotiations have a comprehensive agreement and try to deal with all of the major issues. Otherwise, talks break down and people opt out. Yes, you will have problems implementing them, but at least you have a base

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<sup>64</sup> Ian Paisley was a Unionist politician and religious leader, he led the DUP, which strongly opposed the Good Friday Agreement and the Northern Ireland peace process (until after the St. Andrews Agreement.)

<sup>65</sup> The D'hondt system is a method for allocating seats in a type of proportional representation.  
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucahawi/dhondt.pdf>



document. It is the common document, and they can argue then, but at least there is a basis. I suppose I should say that negotiating the agreement was probably the easiest part; implementing it was the hard issue: reforming the police and setting up a new police force to be acceptable to all the parties in the North; changing the justice system, which required a lot of legislation; releasing prisoners on license and hoping they would not create mayhem when out; organising elections. It took time to fully implement it, from 1998 to 2007, but we made progress with every year. We made more progress on some issues than on others, on some we really dealt with the issues successfully (police and justice system, even release of prisoners went well, very few reoffended).

The big trouble was trying to get various paramilitary groups to dispose of their arms. We set up an international commission for the decommissioning of arms, but it took a long time to try to convince the IRA and the Loyalists to hand in their arms. They had huge masses of arms and very sophisticated weaponry; the IRA collected arms from America, Qaddafi shipped them arms as well. It took us a long time to deal with that issue. Then we had a lot of difficulty with security issues as well, trying to get people to abide by the law. Some people wanted to be in politics on one hand, but remained violent on the other hand.

In 2006, we finally convinced the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to come into the talks, and had a subsidiary agreement (St Andrews Agreement).<sup>66</sup> Finally, the last bit of the jigsaw was implemented in 2007. We were trying to get it done before Tony Blair left office.

The Agreement works. There have been very little problems since 2007 in Northern Ireland; very little violence, and a lot of progress. The parties now have to deal with the every day issues of health, education, welfare, employment, agriculture, and issues in Europe. Before, they would spend time talking about the Troubles, so it has worked well.

There are lots of pluses to the Good Friday Agreement, but one of the minuses is that in Northern Ireland, there is not really opposition, as parties share power in the Executive. This may change in the future, but I do not think it would be a good idea for a long time.

I have worked on many conflicts in recent years: in the Basque Country, and in Ukraine since last summer among others. It is hard to do anything as long as there is violence. There is not much confidence a truce. Later this week I will go to Washington, to discuss Iran - recently I was in

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<sup>66</sup> Following multi-party talks held in St Andrews, Scotland, regarding the devolution of power to Northern Ireland, the St Andrews Agreement was signed by the British and Irish Government and all the major political parties in Northern Ireland on 13 October 2006. It restored the Northern Ireland Assembly and created a new Northern Ireland Executive.

Tehran. I have good relations with the Iranians and their negotiators, I have been taking a bit of a role in these negotiations, to try to get some of their side of the story to Washington. They are making progress. I think John Kerry<sup>67</sup> wants to make progress, it is some of our friends in Israel who keep on rocking the boat, they do not want to see this work.

From my point of view, in conflict, what you need is patience. Things will not happen overnight, and you must continue to try to get people to look at the bigger picture, to see long term benefits, and keep the dialogue going on. There is not much point in getting frustrated. There is no situation that is not open to resolution if people are determined to keep on trying. Sometimes it leads to military action, but most of the time it can be solved on the basis of dialogue and compromise. My experience is, once you can get people debating and talking, understanding issues, you do ultimately get some compromises. I do not think, in any conflict, that someone can get their own way on everything; it will ultimately never work. There has to be a sense of sharing the pain and gain, of finding resolution and moving forward. That is what you people and people like me try to find: ways to make progress and see sense.

It was important everywhere, but particularly in Northern Ireland, to remember the victims of violence. I spent years in Northern Ireland meeting people whose family members had been killed. It is very hard for these people to feel that they can make political progress, people who have suffered horrendous deaths in their family during the “Troubles”. It takes a lot to convince them that there is a better day. Most people are extraordinarily generous; they do not end up loving the other side, they never will, but at least 95 per cent of people are willing to give peace and political dialogue a chance. I think that is a very important part of the issue.

**Q: What was Mary Robinson’s<sup>68</sup> role?**

A: The President is more of a figurehead, so she would not be very much involved. She did shake hands with Gerry Adams once, even though the government attacked her. I had to defend her. That shows, you could not even shake hands with someone who was involved. The President, more so in recent years, maybe from Robinson’s time and then McAleese<sup>69</sup> and now Higgins<sup>70</sup>, generally goes to the North a lot, and makes speeches. One time it was unheard of, so it does help that they reach out to the communities now. Even though Belfast is only 100 miles from here, from 1921 to probably 1995/96, there were maybe only two or three visits by Irish officials. It was the same with trade, it was really separated.

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<sup>67</sup> John Kerry is the current United States Secretary of State under the Obama Administration.

<sup>68</sup> Mary Robinson served as President of Ireland from 1990 until 1997

<sup>69</sup> Mary McAleese was elected as President of Ireland from 1997 until 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Micheal D. Higgins is the 9<sup>th</sup> and current President of Ireland, he assumed office in 2011.

**Q: Could you talk about the importance of personality? We hear a lot about your relationship with former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and former United States President Bill Clinton as well, what was the role of personalities and relationships in moving forward?**

A: If people do not get on well, it is very hard to make much progress. You have to have a personal chemistry to be prepared to work together. You do not have to agree all the time, but if you can tolerate each other, and negotiate a round the true things it helps. Bill Clinton was there to help us when we needed him. In the negotiations in the North, it is understandable. If people are involved in conflict for years, and you grow up in a conflict setting, they are almost happier when they are fighting. Sometimes in the North, Tony Blair would do these three-four days of intensive negotiations, then come back again. It would have been a terrible day - abuse, fights, arguments, bad spirited things said, and then we would all sit down and joke. The following day you get up and you go on again. By the morning the mean spirit would be gone, and they would be willing to tolerate each other. I used to say to politicians in the North, "Why cannot you be like elected politicians, dealing with issues that matter? You guys just want to argue about the conflict, but we have to get to a day where we deal with normal issues." I enjoy turning on the television now and finding a debate about education, it is good. Sometimes elected political people, their whole mandate is being impossible people in conflict zones.

Ian Paisely, he got the biggest vote in Europe, more than any other politician, and he was just impossible - everything was "no", against everything - not an inch of compromise. He rarely had a positive thing to say. He would not shake hands with me for years. When I went to the European Parliament, he was shouting and abusing me the whole time. Eventually, we won him over. He was an old man by then. If they get away with being 'against' and 'against', it takes a long time to deal with that.

The element that made the Agreement happen in the end was that it constituted the shared view of the British and Irish governments. We set down their views, and that had to include the Northern Irish parties and the people of Ireland as a whole, as well as present how relations could be configured in the future. "This is our view, we think this is your view, we just spent 18 months talking...". There were changes made in the constitutions of both the North and South. The big change was that we enshrined the principle of consent<sup>71</sup> into our constitution. It was no longer a fight, but the will of the people in freely held democratic elections. We had institutional provisions for the government. I told you about policing, prisoners, and economic

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<sup>71</sup> *One of the key points of the Good Friday Agreement, the principle of consent emphasises the right to self-determination for the people of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.*

and social issues, human rights, the decommissioning of arms. We put the entire Agreement to referendum in the whole of Ireland, so we had a vote. About a month later everybody in the island of Ireland had the chance to vote, and that gave it a mandate. Then, people could not say that they did not have the chance to vote on it.

**Q: One of the important elements for a successful peace process is inclusivity. It is interesting in this case, how were you able to secure a deal without the inclusion of an important actor. How did you manage that?**

**Q: Did you have in the agreement any positive discrimination for the Catholics, considering the historic abuse against them?**

A: It would have been better for us to have Paisley's party included, and we kept trying. After 1998, for probably three-four years, his party opposed the Agreement, which made life difficult, but he realised this was going to work, so they became positive. He was not going to accept the Good Friday Agreement but still entered into negotiations. Luckily, we had a review clause which said that after five years, we could have a review of matters that might be outstanding, so we used that review clause. I think what they found was, while there were a lot of people still against, and their supporters did not like the Good Friday Agreement, very young people in their 20s liked peace and did not want violence, so they got themselves sucked into supporting the Agreement, but wanted some changes made. By the time we got to 2006, it was not an issue of going back to war or violence, but how to get themselves into the Agreement.

A: Even though legislation was originally British, the way the judiciary and civil service operated was very hostile to Catholics and Nationalists. So we had a huge change made to human rights legislation. The British parliament was helpful in doing that, because it had to go through them, the criminal justice system and the whole administration of justice and human rights. The British government was effective - a lot of bigotry and animosity was removed in that legislation. We were also lucky in that some of the people were good, and were committed to making the change work.

**Q: But no positive discrimination?**

A: It was not so much that, but getting rid of discrimination laws. The risk with positive discrimination was that you could get yourself in the same situation, but from the opposite side. Today, we rarely hear about people experiencing discrimination by members of the judiciary or members of the police. The biggest transformation was in the police.

**Q: As far as I remember from the Northern Irish case, you did not touch some of the complex issues in the Good Friday Agreement. What kind of things did you leave for the years after the Agreement? And how did you decide to do it with the other parties involved in the conflict?**

A: There were some difficult issues, and the decommissioning of arms was the biggest challenge. The difficulty was that the IRA in particular, they wanted to hold on to their arms as a card to be played while the Agreement was being implemented. That created huge problems. Then we had a huge security infrastructure in Northern Ireland, and this game went on for years. In the end, the Canadian Chief of Defence, General John de Chastelain, stayed with the process. It took so long to come to a position where no arms were going to be used. If you ask me now, we dried it out too long, we could have done it faster. The elected institution collapsed because of the arms process, so you had to get it back up again, and deal with the arms process. That was very destabilising.

Regarding the political parties, at the time negotiations were going on, there were many small groups, some related to the people involved in violence, some democratic and totally against violence, some that were ambivalent - so it was hard to try to keep them cohesive. We had to spend hours and hours going over the same ground, trying to get them to move their positions. There were 14 groups in all. Tony Blair and I were accused and criticised a lot for talking to the extremes. The extremes when they do become the good guys, tend to be rewarded, which does not sit well with some of the other parties.

Issues like the flag and so on, there are some issues that remain - the flags, the emblems, the peace walls are ongoing issues. I do not think there is an easy solution to these issues, they are cultural issues. It is like asking people to go to a football match and not bring the colours of your team. I do not think it will stop. It is a slow process. The Union flag is still up in Belfast, and I do not think these things will stop in the immediate future. If you can stop discrimination, like forcing people out their houses because they are Catholic, I think that is what is important.

**Q: There was an impasse in the process. Was there a moment or an event which helped move beyond that?**

A: We moved beyond it by arguing and arguing. If you genuinely want reality changed, you will put your arms away. In the end it became clear that some of our hardline tactics were working against themselves. Really, by 2003 we should have been where we were in 2006. I supposed if Gerry Adams were here speaking to us today, he would say that they had to convince his own

people in order to carry them with him, and the only way to do that was to do the slower process. It did stop most of the violence.

**Q: In the Good Friday Agreement, I know the issue of mother-tongue language was somewhat ignored. Only after the Stormont House Agreement are you dealing with this issue. I think the issue of language is very important. Is it being supported by the British government?**

A: The Irish language was not a big issue to be honest, mainly because the vast majority of the people in the North, on the Nationalist side, would not be Irish speaking. They wanted national legislation that said there could be no discrimination against the Irish language, culture or movements. It was not difficult for the British government to do that. In fact, they are being very helpful in giving state grants to Irish sport and language bodies in the North. Ulster-Scots<sup>72</sup> became an issue, but in all of Ireland I could never find anyone who spoke Ulster Scots! It was just a tactic to delay making progress.

**Q: As I was listening to you, I was thinking of the similarities and difference with the Kurdish issue. The thing is, Northern Ireland is a small place and everybody was affected, as opposed to our region, which is predominantly Kurdish and has to live with Turks elsewhere. The peace process usually puts an emphasis on leaders talking. Glencree mentioned how they made dialogue at the societal level, but I got the feeling that it was not as important throughout the process. Did you ask civil society to do any societal bridging?**

A: We tried to keep the lines of communication with civil society open, particularly with the trade union, the press, women's groups - The Women's Coalition, who were really good because they were not from either side, they took a broad view. Monica McWilliams<sup>73</sup> later played a key role in human rights issues. We kept them briefed all the time, and they were very helpful. Whenever there was an impasse, they would protest, march, put in adverts, so civil society was very important, particularly if you could get someone from either side to say nice things that can give a balanced view. It is not easy to find people like that. Trade unions in particular were very good at speaking for both sides. To have civil society involved in a peace process is very important, and Tony Blair and I used to meet with them regularly.

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<sup>72</sup> *Ulster-Scots is the language of the Scots-Irish people, an ethnic group in Ulster, Ireland who trace their roots to settlers from Scotland and Northern England.*

<sup>73</sup> *Monica McWilliams is a Northern Irish academic and politician, and served as the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005 - 2011.*

**Q: I want to ask about the language of peace - did you agree on terms that you would not use in public, like “terrorists”? Did you come up with such definitions, or decide not to use specific terms, until the process was over?**

**A:** The only way to go about the peace process is to say that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. It is almost impossible not to get certain terms expressed. They would never agree to the same terminology. As time moved on, they naturally dropped the terminology. When we started negotiations in September 1997, most people in the room from the different sides had never spoken with each other, even though we all lived in a small area. As negotiations go on, you would be thankful for the small issues - two of them ran across each other in the hallway and said good morning, or had a smoke together. The perseverance of having them talking to each other - discussing last night’s football scores, or about their children. As far as trying to stop them using inflammatory language, you could not do it.

**Q: In your speech, you said that you are following the conflict process in Ukraine and Iran. It is interesting, because Syria is in a harsher conflict, but in smaller places. It is easy to solve problems between people who know why they are fighting. When you look from the outside, it is difficult to understand what people are fighting about. Despite these reconciliation efforts, why is the world going to a bad place?**

**A:** The amount of conflict continues to grow, and the amount of bitterness continues to grow. The level of arms and groups involved in conflict to get to arms continues to grow. The Iranian situation, in my view, is a solvable issue. I do not think there has to be violence whatsoever, and there is a really good chance of making progress. If that happens, Iran is currently getting along well with Iraq and Afghanistan, and could also be helpful in the Syrian situation. I do not think there is an easy solution in Syria, but someday somebody will try to get a hand on it. On Libya, I actually went there about a month ago. They would convince you that if they could get one leader instead of two governments to make progress under, there is some possibility to make progress, at least in some parts of Libya. In Korea, it is a regime change. The only way it can happen is with help and support, not by violence. The Chinese have to play a big part in that, and the Americans realised that the best they can do is stay out of it. In Ukraine, I think Putin will wake up someday and realise it is not good for Russia, and that if he continues this way he will be making a lot of trouble for himself. The biggest sufferer will ultimately be Russia.

A lot of conflicts have solutions. I have been involved in this business for 20 years. There are some things fundamentally wrong, like the UN is sometimes seen as a useless body. I think I had addressed the UN more than any of the other ministers, but it gets absolutely nowhere. With all

these diplomats... In 2004, when I had Presidency to the EU, I dealt with Cyprus, and I remember the referendum in 2004 - I told them it was a waste of time.

I will tell you one thing. I dealt with Northern Ireland from 1993 to 2008. Northern Ireland was one of the last big conflicts remaining in Europe. Never once did I speak to somebody from the UN. The day after the Agreement, Kofi Annan<sup>74</sup> rang me!

**Q: The peace process in Turkey is going on, and there is talk that the higher authority of the PKK will be sent to Europe instead of Turkey. Did you raise any points regarding the higher authorities of the IRA being sent out of Ireland, or did you send them to other places in the world?**

A: No, they remained where they were. The masterminds of the campaign all live on this island. Many of them went back to work, a small number went into criminality, but people who ran the campaign were able to go back to work.

**Q: You said that you are following conflicts all over the world. The situation in Turkey is somewhat different - the PKK are not located in Turkey, but in Northern Iraq. If they go back to their homes, what should the Turkish authorities do?**

A: Some of the IRA leaders were in the US because they moved there, and others wanted to move abroad, but if we had forced the situation, and forced them to go, it would not have worked. I had just debated with the Spanish government, and said - which is best for you? To stop the violence totally and go on living normal lives, or that they are somewhere else and still plotting against you? The ultimate goal is to stop violence. If you try to dictate where leaders go, it is very difficult. This is what happened in places like East Timor, where they are trying to drive people out using horrendous violence.

**Catriona Vine:**

Thank you for your excellent contribution, I am sure that everyone will take away a lot from it, and circulate your experiences with the public in Turkey. Thank you very much.

*End of Session*

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<sup>74</sup> Kofi Annan is a Ghanaian diplomat who served as the Seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 1997 to December 2006.



Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015

## Tour of the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) at the Houses of the Oireachtas



*Participants in front of the Leinster House building, where the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) convenes*

To close the visit, participants engaged in a private tour of the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament), hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland. The tour was followed by a meeting with several TDs (Parliamentarians), in which participants had the opportunity to exchange views and ideas following the various roundtables held in Dublin during this comparative study visit.