



# **'Keeping a Peace Process on Track'**

## **A Comparative Study Visit Report**

Dublin, Dundalk and Belfast

19th – 23rd April 2015

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## Contents

Session 1: Introduction & Agenda.....	7
Dinner Reception at the Residence of the Turkish Ambassador to Ireland.....	12
Session 2: Roundtable Discussion: Conflict Resolution in Ireland: An Overview of the Irish Peace Process.....	14
Session 3: Roundtable Discussion: Perspectives from the Irish Government on the Role of international Actors in the Good Friday Agreement – Past and Present.....	29
Tour of the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament), Houses of the Oireachtas.....	51
Session 4: Roundtable with members of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement .....	54
Dinner Reception with International Guests at the Shelbourne Hotel.....	66
Session 5: Roundtable with former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern: The Good Friday Agreement Negotiations .....	68
Session 6: Roundtable Discussion with Liz O'Donnell: The Mitchell Principles in Practice .....	86
Session 7: Roundtable Discussion with Dermot Ahern: Setting the Scene for the Good Friday Agreement.....	101
Session 8: Roundtable Discussion with the Northern Ireland Office: The Role of the British Government in the Good Friday Agreement.....	115

Session 9: Roundtable Discussion with Sinn Féin Members of Parliament: The Role of international Actors in Moving from Armed Struggle to a Political Solution .....129

Session 10: Roundtable Discussion with Senator George Mitchell: Facilitating a Peace Process .....142

Session 11: Roundtable Discussion with Jeffrey Donaldson MP: Perspectives on international Actors and the Decommissioning Body in Northern Ireland.....153

Session 12: Roundtable Discussion with Former Prisoners: The Role of International Actors in Civil Society Engagement with the Good Friday Agreement .....162

Private Tour of Belfast's 'Peace Walls' and Interface Areas.....174

## Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015

### Session 1: Introduction & Agenda

Venue: The Westbury Hotel, Dublin, Ireland



*Eleanor Johnson, DPI Head of Programmes, welcoming participants to Dublin and discussing the Comparative Study Visit agenda.*

#### **Eleanor Johnson:**

Welcome and good evening. Hosgeldiniz! It is a pleasure to see you all. Welcome to Dublin on behalf of the Democratic Progress Institute. Tonight, we will have dinner at the Turkish Ambassador's private residence in Killiney, so I not take too long. I would like to give you an overview of the programme and the days ahead of us. First of all, I wish to apologise on behalf of DPI's Director Kerim Yildiz, who was called away for urgent work this evening and so is unable to join us. He will be with you later this evening or tomorrow. I am delighted to see Mr

Ali Bayramoğlu, member of our Council of Experts, with us and it is a pleasure to see new faces as well.

Let us discuss our agenda. In front of you, you will find documents with summaries of the Good Friday Agreement, the Sunningdale Agreement, and the St. Andrews Agreement. They may be useful texts to keep with you. You will also find background reading materials and agendas in your pack.

Most of you will be familiar with the background of DPI but I will give you a short summary. DPI was established in 2010 by a number of conflict resolution experts from many different countries around the world, including Turkey and others ranging from Peru, South Africa, and Ireland. By now we have formed a number of programmes focusing on conflict resolution, including the Turkey programme, of which this visit is part. We are also working in Syria, Afghanistan and we also carry out work in relation to Colombia, the Basque Country, and other regions internationally.

The aims and objectives of DPI are to broaden the bases for dialogue and conflict resolution. This is done mainly through study visit such as this one, as well as roundtable meetings in Turkey. A larger study visit was held last year in which a number of you participated.

We also have an in depth research programme at DPI and you can find our research reports on our website. Most of them are translated into Turkish, some into Kurdish, and all are available in English. Our roundtables take place in various areas of Turkey, most recently in Istanbul and also in regional areas such as Urfa, Van, and Mardin. We hope to have more roundtables of this kind in different regions in Turkey



soon. Topics include the role of the media in conflict resolution, the role of women in conflict resolution and how civil society can play a role in conflict resolution. DPI's comparative studies visits have been taking place in a number of countries looking at post-conflict societies to gain from international experiences. The governments of each respective country visited host all visits such as this one. For example, in South Africa we looked at the democratic transition process, in Germany we looked at governance issues and constitutional affairs, and in Wales and Scotland we looked at the role of language, devolution, and education. We also paid a number of visits to Ireland and Northern Ireland, which many people have found useful. Over the next year we are planning a comparative visit to the Philippines, as well as other roundtable meetings in Turkey on topics such as transitional justice, the role of civil society, dealing with the past, the choreography of peace process and others.

I will be here along with Esra whom you all know; Mr. Yildiz will join us later. We are happy to answer any questions you may have about DPI's work.

Let's turn to the agenda. We have a full programme and we will meet as many actors in the peace process as possible. Some of them can be difficult to get hold of, as some are not based in Ireland so we are privileged to be in a position to meet them. We arranged roundtables for you with key actors from the peace process, for example Bertie Ahern, the former Prime Minister of Ireland. We aim to meet most key figures of the Good Friday Agreement, such as US Senator George Mitchell, a name you will hear mentioned a lot due to his chairing role in the Good Friday Agreement talks and as a US Special Envoy. The visits will take place here in Dublin today and tomorrow, and then in Dundalk, which is a border town between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to meet with

Dermot Ahern, former Minister of Foreign Affairs. The visit will end in Belfast, with two nights spent there. We want you to get as much out of this visit as possible, so please ask questions to speakers and make the most of your time with them.

As a short recap of our plans for the next few days the agenda and biographies of speakers you will be meeting are in your packs. Dinner this evening is hosted by the Turkish ambassador to Ireland who will be joined by Sir David Reddaway, the former British Ambassador to Ireland and to Turkey. Tomorrow we will have a full day in the centre of Dublin. In the morning we will meet with the CEO of the Glencree Peace and Reconciliation Centre, who will talk about the role they played as a civil society organisation during the Troubles and the peace process. He will also give an overview of the conflict before we go into more technical detail with other speakers. He is a good person to ask about factual questions and will provide a comprehensive overview for you.

We will then be leaving for Iveagh House, which houses the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, where we will have a meeting with the Conflict Resolution Unit of the Department, followed by a private tour through Parliament with the Department of Foreign Affairs. We will be meeting with members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in charge of the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Dinner will be in the city centre with the former British Ambassador to Ireland, Sir David Reddaway, and the Turkish Ambassador and other international diplomatic guests who are looking forward to meeting you.

On Tuesday we will be travelling to Drumcondra, a suburb of Dublin, which is the constituency of former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern (from 1997-2008). Mr. Ahern was known for having a strong partnership

with the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, during the Good Friday Agreement process. This meeting is followed by meeting Liz O'Donnell, the Irish government's main negotiator at the Good Friday Agreement. We will then leave to Dundalk, the border town, to meet with Dermot Ahern, the former minister of foreign affairs. This will be an introduction into travelling to Northern Ireland.

We will spend Wednesday in Belfast, meeting with British government officials in Northern Ireland, from the Northern Ireland Office, where we will hear about their perspective on the conflict and the peace process. After that, we will enter Stormont, the Northern Irish parliament, to meet with members of Sinn Féin,<sup>1</sup> followed by a meeting with Senator George Mitchell. In the afternoon we will be meeting the other side, a member of parliament of the Democratic Unionist Party.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the day we will go on a tour of the interface areas of Belfast. There we will meet with former prisoners of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and will have a chance to talk to them. That will be the end of the programme and we will depart for Dublin airport on Thursday.

We have a very full programme ahead of us and hopefully it will prove valuable and useful to you. I am looking forward to spending the next few days with you all.

*End of session*

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1 REF Sienn Fein is the oldest political movement in Ireland focusing on attaining national self-determination.

2 DUP is the biggest loyalist party.

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## **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

### **Dinner Reception at the Residence of the Turkish Ambassador to Ireland, Killiney Bay**

With:

**His Excellency Necip Egüz**, Turkish Ambassador to Ireland

Şenay Egüz, Turkish Ambassador's wife

**Işıl Gürler Ileri**, Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission,  
Turkish Embassy to Ireland

**Cemal Sangu**, First Secretary, Turkish Embassy to Ireland

**Susan Conlon**, Deputy Director Enlargement and West Balkans,  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

**Sir David Reddaway**, former British Ambassador to Ireland and  
to Turkey, member of DPI Council of Experts



*DPI Participants with His Excellency Necip Egüz*



*DPI Participants at a dinner reception hosted by his Excellency Necip Egüz*

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Session 2: Roundtable Discussion: Conflict Resolution in Ireland: An Overview of the Irish Peace Process**

**Venue: The Westbury Hotel, Dublin, Ireland**

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



**Eleanor Johnson:** We are here to meet Will Devas, the Chief Executive of the Glencree Reconciliation Centre. Will has been an experienced development and peace-building professional since 2013. His work is related to transforming violent conflict between divided communities in Ireland (both in the north and south), the UK, and the world. His work forms an important part of civil society activities in Ireland. He will give a background of the Northern Ireland conflict and the peace process. The overview will prove useful for the meetings we go into over the coming days, to clarify about geographies, groups involved and so on. This session provides a good opportunity to ask factual questions you may have.

**Will Devas:**<sup>3</sup> Thank you. Good morning everybody and welcome to Dublin. I work for Glenree, which is a peace-building centre. It started its work in 1974 as a result of the Troubles when there was violence primarily in Northern Ireland, which lasted for 35 years. The main thing to mention is dialogue. It is important to bring people together, often enemies, to talk, build relationships, to find solution for the reasons of conflict. I will talk about two things today: about the history and reasons for the conflict on the island, and a little bit about the history of the peace process.



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3 William Devas is the Chief Executive Officer at Glenree 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.

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There is one lesson you need to take away that is - even the basic history that I will give is contested. Some would listen to what I say and argue that it is wrong, that it was not what happened. We cannot agree on one history of this island. Everyone has a different interpretation of what happened, of why it happened. I cannot win, but will try to give a few facts and dates on the conflict as objectively as possible. I start with the map of the island. Here is Dublin; tomorrow you will go to Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is part of the UK, with Scotland, England and Wales. The rest of the island is the Republic of Ireland, sometimes called 'the South'. And 'the North' is referring to Northern Ireland. There is a border in between, but no checkpoints.<sup>4</sup>

100 years ago, this island was all one country, governed by Westminster in the UK. We had 800 years of English rule in Ireland. In 1921 the island was partitioned following a war seeking independence for the whole island. A majority of the people in Northern Ireland were Protestant and very loyal to Britain; they were British. Most in the South, in the Republic, were Catholic and Irish. They wanted an independent Irish country. Negotiations between London and the people who were fighting the war of independence took weeks. The agreement said that six counties remain part of the UK, the rest was to be independent. In 1921 Ireland was partitioned, creating two countries on one island.

Two important minorities were created. In the South, people were mainly Catholic, with a reasonable Protestant minority, mostly near the border. Northern Ireland was Protestant mainly, with quite a large Catholic minority. Protestants mainly resided in the east, and the west was more Catholic in Northern Ireland. Londonderry or Derry, the second city is right on the border and is very Catholic. Belfast is the biggest city, also

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<sup>4</sup> Map image is from InfoPlease at < <http://i.infoplease.com/images/mireland.gif> >



with quite a lot of Catholics. Bloody Sunday occurred in Derry, when British troops killed 13 demonstrators.

Northern Ireland was a one-party state from 1920 to the 1970s, with the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) ruling. Although there were other parties, it was always the UUP that controlled the North. London still controlled foreign policy and taxation. There was a lot of inequality. For example, Protestants were favoured with jobs, housing, better voting rights. Community relations were not bad but there was inequality and if one group gets pushed down for a long time, it gets upset and discontent, and feels it deserves better.

In the US in the 1960s, with Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, there was an example set for Northern Ireland. People took inspiration and began campaigning for 'one man, one vote'. If you owned a business in Northern Ireland you had two votes: Protestants owned more businesses meaning there were more votes for Protestants. They were also campaigning about access to housing and jobs. This was largely a peaceful movement but some violence erupted, and in 1969 we often say the 'Trouble's were triggered. In 1972 the British took over because the Northern Irish government were unable to keep control of the rioting, marching, violence and bombs. They removed the control of security from the government and installed direct rule, and once again took control.



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

It was effectively 30 years of conflict that followed. One part of it was driven by the British army when in 1972 the army came into Northern Ireland as a military police force to try to keep control. At this time other military groups had started to emerge. Most famous was the IRA, known as Republicans, sometimes called the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and sometimes 'Provos'. On the Unionist side, also known as the Loyalist, Protestant side, other military organisations emerged like the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) or the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). There was violence from late 1969 until the 1990s and the main people involved were the British army, the IRA, and Loyalist paramilitary organisations. If I use the term Loyalist, it is based in the working class and usually associated with sympathy to military organisations. They did not necessarily support the paramilitaries but were sympathetic to them during the Troubles. They felt they were defending their communities from the bombings of the IRA. The IRA, in turn, felt it was defending their communities from the British army and the paramilitaries.

Most violence was from 1969 until 1994, and in 1994 we had ceasefires. The IRA first declared a ceasefire that put a stop to violence, but not forever. It wished to stop violence to look for other solutions. A couple of month's later Loyalist groups also declared a ceasefire. It was from then on that political negotiation made progress. After four years in 1998 we had the Good Friday Agreement, which was very important. They agreed on a number of things that mainly included power sharing between those who wished to be Irish, Republican or nationalist and those who wanted to be British, often Loyalist or Unionist. After the elections, the strongest party would be senior partner and the second strongest their junior partner, all in a power-sharing government after the D'Hont system.<sup>5</sup>

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

5 The D'Hont system, named after a Belgian lawyer, is a type of proportional electoral system that encourages cross party inclusion in order to be more representative. It uses a mathematical formula based on the principle of the "highest average" and tends to favour large party's total support. This is how government departments are allocated.

Negotiations were primarily between the British government under Tony Blair as Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern as Irish Prime Minister, and the main political parties in Northern Ireland negotiating Good Friday Agreement. The main parties were Sinn Féin, directly linked to the IRA as its political arm, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), who were described as nationalist, anti-violence and has always wished for a united Ireland. Sinn Féin was pro violence, or they saw violence as the only option to achieve a united Ireland. On the Unionist side you had the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) ruling from 1920 to the 1970s, and a new party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), founded by Ian Paisley. Some may have heard of him, as he was a divisive and important figure in Northern Irish history. In 1998 the two biggest parties ,SDLP and UUP formed a government. In the early 2000s this happened between Sinn Féin and the Alliance Party that was aligned in the middle and was neither Unionist nor Republican. They want to do whatever the majority wishes. In 1998 the DUP said 'no, never' and refused to engage in negotiations or to accept the agreement. 'How can you have a government with terrorists in power? How can you agree to the Republic having some say in affairs of Northern Ireland?'

Today, in 2015, Sinn Féin and the DUP lead the government. People on the extremes are now in charge and are by far the biggest parties in Northern Ireland. One lesson is that until you include everyone, however much you dislike there past behaviour, sustainable peace is very hard to achieve. Paramilitaries on the Unionist side would by and large support DUP; Sinn Féin and the IRA were closely linked. Until the extremes could agree, there would never be a lasting agreement.

From 1998 it took ten years to implement the Good Friday Agreement. There were two big problems; one was decommissioning. The DUP

said that they would never negotiate until the IRA had destroyed their weapons. They said they would not get rid of weapons until there was an agreement that meant acceptance and equality. That took a long time to resolve. Secondly, there was the matter of policing and justice. It was agreed in the Good Friday Agreement that policing would come back from London to Northern Ireland. But the police in Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), had a history of being very unfair. From 1920 to the 1990s, they were almost entirely Protestant and had a reputation of being unfair to Catholics. They reacted strongly against Catholic violence, but against Protestant violence not so much, was the perception, and perhaps the reality. Those who had suffered from the RUC were nervous to have policing back in Northern Ireland. The new police force, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), is now seen as a great success. There was a big commission by external actors about how to do that best, and it turned out to be a great success.

There are two other important things, one being the inclusion of outsiders. We talked about the British and the Irish government, but other important people were involved. The Americans were very helpful with Bill Clinton making a lot of phone calls and meeting many people during the Good Friday Agreement. Late at night he may have been ringing Gerry Adams.<sup>6</sup> Probably more important was George Mitchell,<sup>7</sup> the American who negotiated the Good Friday Agreement. I have not heard anyone say that he was not a very good facilitator of discussions. Without them it would have been hard to achieve the agreement and its implementation, such as decommissioning. If it were not for the international monitoring commission, lead by Canadian General

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<sup>6</sup> *Gerry Adams was the leader of Sinn Féin, the second largest party in Northern Ireland and the largest Republican Party.*

<sup>7</sup> *George Mitchell was a Democrat Senator from Maine who was appointed and United States Special Envoy to Northern Ireland by Bill Clinton in 1995.*

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DeChastelain, this would have probably never been sorted out, therefore externals were very important. Ultimately the UK, Northern Ireland, and Ireland had to sort out our own problems but it was not just all our doing, help of third parties was useful.

What is the situation today in 2015? The government is made up of Sinn Féin and DUP as the main parties in Northern Ireland. The Republicans are wishing for a united Ireland, and the Unionists wish to remain part of the UK. The DUP is bigger than Sinn Féin. There are elections on May 7 2015 in the UK and we will probably see the DUP remain the biggest party. We also still have the UUP and the SDLP but they are much smaller now, and the Alliance is still in the middle.

We have three main problems today. The first is the past, or let us call it 'dealing with the past.' There had been 30-35 years of violence among not much more than one million people in Northern Ireland. It is hard to find someone who was not affected by the violence, who did not know someone, affected or had been affected themselves. The level of trauma and suffering, which is passed down to children, is widespread. We have not yet found solutions of how to deal with the past. People feel that they want justice: 'I do not know how and why my son was killed, I need to know'. They may want them [the perpetrators] in prison. On the other side, some say maybe we should just draw a line in the sand and move forward. We have not found a solution as a society to help people with suffering that seek information, the promotion of peace, and the continuation of peace and reconciliation.

Another issue is that of culture and identity. In Northern Ireland you have 55 per cent of the Republic saying they are British and 45 per cent Irish; so almost 50-50. Yet many are still upset that their culture is not

accepted or not valid. There are problems about flag protests. In Belfast, the council voted that the Union Jack (the British Flag), which flew on the City Hall in Belfast every day, would only fly 18 days of the year (for example on the Queen's birthday, Prince Charles's birthday and on other significant days). People who were Unionist and particularly Loyalists, were very upset by this. It hit their heart: 'my culture is being taken away by them. Those others, Irish, want to take my culture away'. There was rioting and protests. The flag was not the problem but rather the idea of whether your culture is accepted by other people. It is the same for the Irish; their flag is not allowed to fly: 'I want to speak Irish, play Irish music'. This is still reason for tension today. Do we have to accept that there are British and Irish people living in same place? We have to, but we are struggling.

A third issue is that of parades. A tradition for the Unionists is to parade, particularly in summer, celebrating battles won 200 years ago, and other things. Five or six parades cause huge problems mainly in Belfast. They go past areas where Catholics live who say, 'we do not want their parades and music and songs telling about victory over us'. There are hundreds of parades, for most there is an agreement on how they are to happen. This poses a great source of division. Unionist politicians say we have to sort out this parade issue.

Last year there was the Stormont House Agreement. Mainly the parties in Northern Ireland negotiated it with the Irish government and the British government to solve these issues. There is some progress but the implementation of the agreement is the tricky bit.



## **Eleanor Johnson opens the floor for questions.**

**Participant:** There was no truth and reconciliation commission in Northern Ireland. Why is that?

**Will Devas:** This is a fair question. There is no political will for reconciliation commission. Why? If I was Sinn Féin, the British army or the British intelligence I would need to give out all the files on everything we did. There was collaboration with the paramilitaries and British intelligence officers telling these organisations that ‘this person is in that bar’ for example. They then put a bomb there and killed that person. You could say there was collusion. We need to see what happened. They say they will never agree to show everything, so a commission is useless because you would only get half the truth.

On the other side, the British army would say, because you [the IRA] were a ‘terrorist organisation’ you just killed without any paperwork, you



could not even produce evidence. You would not reveal atrocities, sexual abuse, and abuse of your own people. My suspicion is, in reality no one wants it because they are scared of what they have to reveal.

There is a victim-centred approach instead. There is not a commission for all issues but a system of 'I lost my brother, the people who killed him are unlikely to be prosecuted' – so a commission for information retrieval. Questions such as 'Can you find out information about my brother?' are asked. The commission is sealed in theory and legally, people working their can go to the IRA or the British army: 'can you give us information about what happened to this person?' They may then give out the information that is not allowed to be used in court. So, in theory, this is safe. I have learned in my work as a peace-builder that relatives just want to know why and how, and then things are better. They want to be able to have closure, to get on with their lives.

This commission's work is not happening yet but it was agreed on. They have two years to set it up after the Stormont House Agreement. Some people ask: what about South Africa? Many study visits look at their reconciliation.

**Participant:** What steps were made to include the media and academia in reaching the agreement? And concerning information, there often seems to be a lack of cultural information. It requires other social actors.

**Will Devas:** This was very important, during the violence and leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. Civil society was very important, sometimes individuals, sometimes organisations. There were famous church people, Father Alec Reid for example, a Catholic priest who acted as facilitator between John Hume and Gerry Adams because they did not

like each other. With his help they were able to have discussions in the 1980s. This very much helped the peace process to start.

Organisations like Glencree had political dialogue workshops in the 1990s. People were coming down to Dublin and this helped the high-level negotiations. Civil society in Northern Ireland and with us in the South was very important to help the political discussion. The media was probably less helpful, they like violence. They are quicker to report on problems and less quick to report on better things. They are important though for cultural and identity issues, crucial I would say. One problem at the moment is the people in power in Northern Ireland, the DUP and Sinn Féin. People are angry. They feel these parties do not do anything to help their daily lives. They carve up power, and then do little for the people, which makes them frustrated with politics.

**Participant:** I would like to know about the American involvement. At which points were the Americans invited to assist as a third party to conflict?

**Will Devas:** I do not know about the first time they got involved. There were a number of agreements in 1975 and in the 1980s, none of them worked. In the run-up to 1998 the Americans became very important. There was one key moment when President Bill Clinton's administration granted Gerry Adams a visa to come to the US for three days in 1994, I think. The British government under John Major was furious. They said 'How dare you let terrorists in, give him the credibility to go to the US'. Actually with the benefit of hindsight that was important. It gave Adams some more legitimacy and helped negotiations. It was a risky initiative. Clinton knew that. In the run up to the negotiations Clinton would be on the phone for hours to various people to encourage and push. Even

now Clinton came two or three years ago offering his support. He is truly committed to Irish peace.

**Participant:** Do the Americans involved have Irish roots?

**Will Devas:** Some do, some do not. The Irish vote in America is important but not that important, unlike the Jewish vote for example. Israelis have real influence in foreign policy, Ireland not so much. They do have a connection though, which is helpful. America was relevant for *our* peace process, maybe not for others. In other contexts their involvement may even be bad and someone else may be more suitable.

**Participant 6:** In terms of policing, what was the approach of the commission?

**Will Devas:** That was dealt with by the Patton commission, led by Lord Christopher Patton, a British politician and former governor of Hong Kong, where he was sent to oversee the handover. It was someone with international standing. He undertook a thorough review of attitudes towards policing among the population on what steps in policing could be taken to create trust. This was done after the Good Friday Agreement. They determined things like having at least 30 per cent Catholics in the police force as a minimum standard. There was a change of logo to make it look less royal because it had looked like it had links to the monarchy. The fact that it is called a police service now, meaning to serve you as the people, not as a government controlling you. I know some police officers who want to do more community policing, want to react quickly when a robbery occurs, but the political situations seems to drag them back. They try to serve but when there are riots, you have to put on riot gear and so on, it gets difficult. By and large, with a few exceptions, the police

force is accepted. There is no real problem with policing anymore, except for a few extremists. That is remarkable.

**Participant:** There was an on-going peace process but on the other hand there were constant provocations, which can bring about traps. What were the sources of provocations, and how were they dealt with?

**Will Devas:** There was a lot of problems during the process, especially during the Good Friday Agreement, or Belfast Agreement. Ian Paisley and the DUP were very much against the Agreement. Paisley was brilliant at speaking, at gathering crowds, at rallying support for his cause. He died last year. As a person he was very charming. His party kept saying, 'no, never, never will terrorists run our country.' Many supported him and he had a clear, simple message. Important in 1998 were the two referendums in Northern Ireland on the Good Friday Agreement, where the people of Ireland voted because their constitution had to be changed such that a majority decision in Northern Ireland could be accepted. In Northern Ireland it passed by a huge margin, almost everyone said yes. The biggest section was linked to the DUP and to Unionists. The Unionists in favour of the Good Friday Agreement were not a strong majority. There were other problems too. The IRA carried out a big bank robbery in the early 2000s, an action that set things back by two years. Some said they could not be trusted but everything started again after six months. You would keep hearing Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern talking about it, they would just keep sticking at it, saying 'let us talk again'. We were lucky to have Ahern and Blair, and have each of them in office for ten years. With their continued leadership they were determined to solve the problem. Dialogue won over provocations and persistence.

*End of session*

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**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Session 3: Roundtable Discussion: Perspectives from the Irish Government on the Role of international Actors in the Good Friday Agreement – Past and Present**

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

With:

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

**Émer 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

**Ralph Victory**, Director of the Communications Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

**Rory Beatty**, Conflict Resolution Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland



**Kerim Yildiz:** Thanks for having us. The Department of Foreign Affairs is an important partner for us and especially on these visits.

**Kevin Kelly:**<sup>8</sup> We are proud to have such a high level delegation from Turkey here with us. We are curious to learn more about it. Welcome to Iveagh House, one of the offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Please ask questions, everything is held under Chatham House rules without formal records. You are curious to learn from the Irish peace process and we are also interested to know about the Turkish peace process, and the challenges you face. You are influential people, with different roles in the Turkish society. Let me introduce my colleagues. On my right is Helena Keleher, Deputy Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, she is leading a number of portfolios and today she will share our work on women in peace and security. This is one of the priorities of our department.

At the end of the table there is Rory Beatty who leads our work on conflict resolution. We are a small team. There is also a colleague from the Anglo-Irish Division here, and a colleague from the Communication Unit. They have first-hand knowledge and expertise of Northern Ireland, of the work of this government and the work of the Department that supports it.

I would like to propose the following format: we will be saying a few words about our work and the way we approach our work. Helena will talk about women and then there will be an introduction by the colleagues of the Anglo-Irish Division. We have tried to listen carefully to DPI and their approach. You hopefully had a useful presentation by Will Devas.

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<sup>8</sup> *Kevin Kelly is the Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, at the Political Division of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.*

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We understand that most of this is new so please ask any questions and you will get a different perspective from this department.

I would like to spend a few minutes explaining our work at the Conflict Resolution Unit. This is an interesting time for us as we are about to conclude a new foreign policy called 'Global Island'. Ireland is a small country but we consider ourselves globally aware and international. There are four million people living here but the size of our diaspora is considerably larger with 40m people of Irish heritage in America. There is a huge footprint in many parts of the world. Our policy is based on the awareness of that; we are trying to harness the potential of that diaspora in pursuit of our foreign policy objectives. We are launching this at the start of 2015 as a framework for our foreign policy.

My name is Kevin Kelly, I am director of the Conflict Resolution Unit. We are a small team within the political division of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and our foreign policy is very much based on values. We try to promote Irish values through our foreign policy, and this document I have been referring to is very much trying to describe the overall values that drive our international engagement. Some will not come as a great surprise to you. We are a neutral but internationally engaged country. We are actively involved in terms of multilateral engagements and as a strong partner in the UN next year we launch our bid to get on the Security Council. Ireland is a strong supporter of the UN's system of multilateralism. Priorities are disarmament, human rights and peacekeeping. We have a strong tradition of Irish engagement and engagement by the Irish army in peacekeeping; people often say that the only reason for our army is in the engagement in peacekeeping work. We are proud to do that as a small country.



Another important theme of our foreign policy is international development cooperation. Ireland has been through a difficult period in terms of economic development in recent years. It has been in the headlines internationally not for the right reasons, for bad reasons, but even in difficult times we maintained our commitment to development cooperation. We have a sizeable programme focused on bilateral cooperation with Africa through our embassies in ten places in Africa. Many of those are in post-conflict countries, which are emerging from generations of war. We developed good relationships with them, to help them developing from aid into trade.

Speaking of the conflict resolution side, back in 2008 the decision was made to establish a conflict resolution unit. It focuses on peace-making to support mediation, facilitation, on agreement in different parts of the world, and on peace-building. There is effort in the areas of conflict prevention and democracy building through the development programme. An important pillar of our work is also lesson learning. You can see a map in your packs showing some of the countries we have worked in, where we have either hosted delegations coming into Dublin like you, which were also coming to Belfast and Dublin to meet key figures in the process. An example is Colombia where we supported an international NGO supporting the mediation in Havana, we have shared relevant documents from Northern Ireland and we translated them for key actors.

We are not missionaries going out saying that we have reached the final state of peace. We are not selling a blueprint for a peace process. We know from our own conflict that every situation is very different and conflicts change all the time. We try to respond to requests, and try to engage where it is relevant and suitable. Colombia is an example in which

we showed, if there is a feeling from protagonists or from key actors, that there could be something useful to learn from Northern Ireland we will try and help. Some of our engagement is very much under the radar and is not publicised so there are no big media events. It is just discreet support. There is increasing interest in learning from the Northern Ireland peace process.

**Helena Keleher:**<sup>9</sup> I would like to talk about the work we do on women in the peace and security agenda. There is the UN Security Council resolution 2025, adopted in 2000, as a response to trafficking in the Balkans and Rwanda. It was adopted according to demand by civil society women groups to make it stop. It has two main goals: firstly to ameliorate the effect of conflict on women and girls, and secondly to increase the participation of women in peace negotiations, in peacekeeping, in development work and so on. It was adopted in 2000, and there were six subsequent supporting resolutions, the most recent one being 2122 in 2014, with the focus on women's participation in decision-making. The minister launched the plan in January and it was endorsed by the government's highest level. This is important for Ireland, as we have had a large tradition of participating in peacekeeping operations for decades, a tradition of overseas development aid, and recent experience of conflict, unlike many who are participating in peacekeeping and sending troops. An independent committee produced a midterm report. Similarly the civil society was important for our second national action plan.

As a quick highlight, there are four main pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and promotion. In terms of prevention for example, we can take action such as training. Irish troops or civilians deployed can do

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<sup>9</sup> *Helena Keleher is the Deputy Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland*

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training on human rights, gender or tackling impunity. Another action is the strategic promotion of peace. The chair from Bangladesh said it is not just about making it safer for women but about preventing war via women's participation. This is also related to our bid for the Security Council seat in 2020. We encourage participation in our own department, in the defence forces, in the peace service, in our action related to Northern Ireland. We also undertake actions to increase women's roles in fragile states and to work with men to improve the role of women in decision-making. Women are often a minority, but actually they are half the population.

Our fourth pillar is protection, on gender-based values; it is also about trafficking and women's roles in humanitarian crises, relief and rehabilitation. It is not just for people affected by conflict but also aimed at migrants, the health service and the department of justice. Our fourth pillar is promoting resolution 2025, to promote the Human Rights Council for example, where we will engage in lesson sharing and public awareness. There are media campaigns funded by the department in relation to that.

There are tensions between protection and participation elements. We need to include both. It is not just about protecting them but giving them a role and a voice. Also, gender does not just mean women. In many ethno-national conflicts one group is dominating the other, this involves masculinity and the protecting brother.

**Kevin Kelly:** I think this work is relevant for Ireland as well as Turkey. I would like to introduce my colleagues, **Émer** Deane, Political Director of the Anglo-Irish, who overall leads the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement with a team working on reconciliation every day. Also,

there is Ralph Victory, currently Director of our Communications Unit. He formerly worked in the Anglo-Irish Division where he was active at the time when looking at the international dimension to the peace process and devolution. We have a sense of DPI and its ideas and we understand some of the themes you are interested in, such as the roles of third parties and monitoring commission to oversee the peace process and decommissioning. We have shared the themes you suggested with our speakers. Please, Kerim, explain the group and its role.

**Kerim Yildiz:** This study is part of our on-going comparative studies visits in Ireland. This particular group has contributed hugely to the on-going resolution on the peace process in Turkey, particularly by looking at how to broaden the bases overall. Most are appointed formally as Wise persons and as professional members of the media. It is one of the first commissions ever in Turkey to explain the peace process. In the past, Kurdish issues were taboo, just like in other conflicts. In the last 12 years, the government has opened a space for change, and this group of friends has contributed enormously to the issue. The important issues are disarmament, monitoring, third party involvement, and the withdrawal of rebels from Turkish soil. We would like to look at the differences between third parties and a monitoring commission, between mediators and facilitators. What makes a successful peace process and how can a successful peace process go further in Turkey?

All countries are different; we have learned that so far from Northern Ireland. However, we do not want to make the same mistakes. We aim to ask a number of questions, to learn about the mechanisms you have used. We have so far learned with two other groups from Northern Ireland. Members of all Turkish parliamentary parties, appointed by party leaders, have taken part in our past visit. This is what we hope to get out after this

trip. Turkey is facing an interesting period, the election period. Hopefully we can take advantage of that with broadened bases in Turkey.

**Émer Deane:**<sup>10</sup> It might be helpful to summarise in five words why international support was important during our peace process. This will be a simplification and may provoke questions from you. Every situation is different and these are very general impacts. First, status: international involvement gives status to the peace process. The world is watching and the world is determined that these actors want peace more than winning. In Ireland that was when international actors became interested. The US wanted to be part of the success. We had to get to that point. The quality of international actors is important: it cannot be just any American, or Canadian and so on. One has to assure that people of quality and international standing come to assist. They need to have status that the world can then attach to the peace process. People need to see who was sent by the US, by the EU, and that they are taking it seriously. It is not just about power, it is whether the person is independent and has values. It does not matter much what understanding they have of the situation, first of all they need values and experience when coming in.

Secondly, in a negotiation context, local politicians need to be given distance from difficult decisions. Any politician is subject to elections, to the media and the criticism of decisions taken. In a conflict, particularly difficult decisions have to be taken. Politicians cannot be expected to suddenly change things; they were not elected for that. As a terrorist organisation you cannot tomorrow become a totally different entity. So if you have an international actor saying that this is a good idea, then you can take a step. The issue is to ensure that the step demanded is not

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

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too big or too small. It also has to ensure that both parties are asked to take a step. Many difficult decisions are to be taken and we need to call on international actors to make a stand and permit locals to take a step.

The third thing is monitoring. There are two ways for that: a formal mechanism to monitor the peace process, like an international commission, and an informal monitoring process. Those who have been involved need to make sure to stay involved. In Ireland for example, there is an annual visit to Washington DC in March from the Irish and the Northern Irish governments. Is everyone doing what he or she should be doing? So there is informal monitoring in addition to formal steps. We have a new political agreement in Northern Ireland since December 2014, the Stormont House Agreement, which returned to a very formal monitoring model because it was previously found that monitoring and implementation was too weak. We lost a few years; we did not have the power we needed for proper implementation.

Fourth, we had investment and economical support from the EU; the US was also very generous and encouraged the private sector to invest in Northern Ireland. Business needs stability and once stability is there they become a powerful civil society voice. If there is backtrack and unrest, business will hate that and leave. The international private sector became supporting.

I would like to make one last point regarding the continuity of the process. There is peace and there is process. We need to measure both. We need to measure the people dying, sectarian attacks, the mere numbers. We also have to measure the process. We need to look at political organisations: do we have a process and when we need international actors can we call them back in? I will finish on this note, with the Stormont House

Agreement, and how to deal with the legacy of the past. The process started in 1994 and in 1998 we had the Good Friday Agreement. Now we are still dealing with the legacy of the past; it is a long process.

**Ralph Victory**<sup>11</sup>: Welcome to Dublin, I hope this visit will be useful. I previously worked from 1995-1997 in the Anglo-Irish Division. I then went off on an EU track, from Brussels to Dublin, and then serving in the Embassy in Poland, then back to the Anglo-Irish Division from 2008-2011. It is an interesting compare-and-contrast exercise. A lot of progress has been made, in some areas not so much. Decommissioning is still delicate, but there has been large progress and we are grateful for that. In 1990s there was no sense of inevitability for that, so everybody had hopes and plans. Over 70 per cent of voters in Northern Ireland opted for the Good Friday Agreement, which reflects the mind-set of people. When there is popular support, negotiators and all stakeholders can draw on it and point to it. It grants legitimacy.

I will speak quickly about the timeline of decommissioning. As a general point, it attracted a lot of attention for a long time, which was not necessarily helpful. This should not be seen in isolation. It was influenced by events in the real world, on the ground, and how they were perceived. We also need to consider technicalities for various initiatives. In 1994, there was a ceasefire from the IRA and some preliminary discussion of giving up weapons. Only towards the end of 1995 did the issue come to the front ranks. How could the Unionist side have confidence with the nationalist side, they wanted reassurance that even if the negotiations would not go as planned, that there was no danger? The British and Irish governments considered this issues with a team led by Senator George

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<sup>11</sup> Ralph Victory, Director of the Communications Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

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Mitchell. The Mitchell Principles ultimately evolved around the issue of decommissioning, that it would be handled in parallel to the promises made on the political track. Do we need a body for that?

A key step in our peace process was to find a process that would deliver on these issues. In early 1996, the real world was affecting in a negative way. In February the IRA's ceasefire collapsed. People can talk about not using weapons or explosives but there is no practical approach unless it is accompanied by willingness and spirit and determination that the recourse to violence is removed from everybody's thinking. Thankfully, throughout 1996 and 1997, we worked towards restoring the IRA ceasefires. There were also elections in Britain and Ireland, and as a result it was agreed by the two new governments to establish two independent commissions by General de Chastelain of Canada, with colleagues from Finland and the US. This created space that allowed for the negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement. It called on parties to achieve decommissioning of all arms within two years after the referendum in context of the overall settlement.

A majority of Unionist parties implied that the decommissioning process would have to start straight away. Decommissioning proved to be a process, there was a lack of progress at the time and it prevented further progress in the political spectrum. By early 2000, it was possible again, with the assistance of international colleagues and inspector Martti Ahtisaari from Finland and Cyril Ramaphosa from South Africa, the IRA agreed in 2000 to put their arms beyond use. Decommissioning was a vital part of the overall process. It was the symbolic context of weapons as a means to achieve political goals, it has occurred in various places of Irish history. There was the implication that giving up arms would have defeated the IRA, which was unacceptable to the Irish side. If progress



should be made any connotation of defeat had to be avoided.

In 2001, decommissioning started again. Through the independent international commission by General de Chastelain, over many years in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there were several acts of IRA decommissioning in 2001, 2002 and further acts in 2004. In 2005, there were two key events in hindsight. One was a large bank robbery in Belfast, with many millions of pounds stolen by some of the IRA side. In early 2005, there was an incident when someone was killed, and IRA involvement was alleged. These real world events impacted on other things, shocked a lot of people, and clarified the view for many. It showed that the progress of decommissioning was very welcomed. This issue had to be completed; there was certainty at this stage. It resulted in a statement by the IRA in July 2005 to end the armed struggle. In the following September, decommissioning was completed with independent figures, including members of the clergy. It was a historic breakthrough moment.

There are tentative lessons: they are not universally applicable but they are interesting. It is important to have a process to address difficult issues, even making tiny progress matters to broaden the agenda around the problem. Decommissioning delayed the whole progress. It delayed the political, human rights, identity, cultural and economic issues, which all ensured that no one aspect could dominate in a negative way. There was the role of independent verification by international figures of repute, like General de Chastelain.

There is a distinction between symbolic-historical aspects of decommissioning and practical aspects. It reminded me of an instance when the head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) said in an interview that there were no illusions in the late 1990s that anybody

who had weapons and decommissioned could just get new ones through channels available. The issue was not just about weapons but also about the mind-sets of people. It was a decommissioning of mind-sets! To be honest, it is hard to argue with reality. The symbolism of history attached to weapons made it very difficult. It was needed to create space, for further progress on the political track. Those are the five or six key lessons we drew.

**Kevin Kelly:** This described the long and twisted role in the peace process, and the various dimensions involved.

**Participant:** In 1998 you said the peace was almost completed but only now do you deal with the past. What can be done to deal with past, is it possible to achieve success in dealing with the past?

**Émer Deane:** The first challenge is to make the past the past. We need peace first, to create a past that is different from the present. That took a number of years. Then you have to build politics. While these things are happening, to a certain extent, you cannot deal with all parts of the past. Releasing prisoners was an immediate part of the agreement and it brought a party related to terrorists into politics: Sinn Féin.

Not dealt with were the deaths. There were on-going police investigations in a normal way. However, because of the volume of deaths during the conflict, in many cases there were no full investigations. There were many controversial deaths with the British state involved, which were not willing to release information. There are cases coming back to the public domain now, every week there is an anniversary and so on. The elections campaigns on the different sides remember all conflict deaths.

In the last four to five years they had to be taken out of politics. We needed to find a framework. That was achieved with the Stormont House Agreement. There was no amnesty as that was not possible in Northern Ireland and it was not what people and parties wanted. Investigations will continue. The percentage of cases with prosecution is small; just four people in the past few years were put to prison. We also established an independent commission for information retrieval (for information, not for evidence, so separate from the judicial process). Anyone with information on dead, whether Ex-IRA, Ex-British soldier or anyone, can come and privately give information to the commission: 'I killed x, I want to give this information to the family'. It works on a case-to-case basis. It works very different to a truth commission as only the family can ask for information. The family can then put it to the media if they want, that would be their choice. This works on a twin track approach with police investigations. So this process is new and the legislation is still being written.

Going back to the international element, there are three layers: the Northern Irish/local parties, the British and the Irish government, and lastly the international community. The local government cannot just take such difficult decisions so the British and the Irish government will do legislation in London and Dublin, not in Belfast. This big responsibility is bigger than local parties and there is need for international management.

**Participant:** Was amnesty ever thought about?

**Émer Deane:** It was considered a number of times. The Attorney General of Northern Ireland recommended it in 2013 but nobody accepted it. It was an important moment that somebody had said it as it shifted the public debate. Everyone accepted that there would be no prosecutions.

This was an important point, as part of original agreement saying that anyone convicted of a crime related to the conflict would only serve two years in jail. Some say this is enough of an amnesty. Most had served more than two years at the time, so they were released. This was the single most difficult decision to release them. It goes against normal justice and democracy but it was essential.

**Participant:** Would the family get to know the name of the perpetrator?

**Émer Deane:** No. In many cases the family already knows and just want verification. Sometimes they even know the name of the perpetrator. The reason for not naming them is that governments have international human rights obligations: the government needs to protect the individual.

**Esra Elmas:** There was no formal amnesty – did former IRA fighters go back to the country?

**Émer Deane:** Just a small number are still on the run, still out of the country. In some cases they received a letter by the government that they would not be pursued. Often there is a lack of evidence. It was after an agreement with the IRA that those confirmation letters were handed out.

**Esra Elmas:** Was there an indirect way of amnesty?

**Émer Deane:** There was the 'two years release', which was a limited amnesty. People can still be prosecuted, which in small numbers happened. No British soldier ever served time in jail. For the Irish government this was most difficult because the IRA or the British army killed a number of our citizens but it has to be accepted. For Britain it was most difficult to accept international assistance and find a way to talk to the IRA. To

Ireland it was challenging to change the constitution, and to release prisoners. For the IRA it was difficult to realise that decommissioning was not surrender. For Unionists, the challenge was to share power! All of that was quite big, easy for no one. There is only peace when everyone accepts that peace is better than winning.

**Participant:** We have the 8<sup>th</sup> ceasefire period in Turkey and we have not been able to start negotiating yet. The first ceasefire by the PKK was in 1993 and the 8<sup>th</sup> in 2013. Now our government does not accept a third party or international involvement. There are no official decrees of forming a committee of Wisemen. Under such conditions no international third party is allowed inside Turkey and so there is no monitoring. What do you think about a monitoring group that is formed of Turkish citizens? There were ceasefires on the part of the IRA; we are still backwards and we do not have time to wait that long. Do you have suggestions on how we can use our time more effectively and how we can make negotiations and agreements? The Kurdish problem has interests in four countries in the Middle East, the UK and the US. The PKK is organised in four countries, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. It has military troops and a strong diaspora in Europe. The problem is time. A public survey shows 60-70 per cent support for the peace process in Turkey. What mistakes can we avoid?

**Émer Deane:** A broadening of the problem is needed. It cannot just be about the PKK and the ceasefire. You need a vision in Turkey. If there is public support, the conversation must be wider, not necessarily international. In terms of the status question: you need to have an independent voice. In Northern Ireland, for example, there were leaders of the faiths overseeing decommissioning. It worked because they were trusted. Because of Syria, public perception is changing; the US and the

UK are looking at things differently. There are opportunities and risks. There is a need to try and find new discourse in public. Use international interest if people are already interested but this does not mean that international actors must lead it. Use the interest, capture it, and create a process. Even if it is separate in order not to upset those who do not want international involvement.

**Kevin Kelly:** This came up many times. Perhaps for Ireland, it was less of a challenge to find a neutral credible international voice. In many other conflicts that we advised it was a real struggle to identify such a neutral voice because of geopolitics.

**Kerim Yildiz:** Status is a difficulty. Who wants status? Who wants to have a third party, and why is it always the rebels or the armed group – because they are weak, or because they are looking for balance?

**Émer Deane:** I will keep my answer short. IRA members are human too, and they have guns and power. They ask questions such as 'what are you offering me [in exchange for me coming to the negotiation table]?' If you have to offer something this offer can be status, access to the US. For the British government it was the realisation that the IRA will not listen to them but they want US friendship.

**Ralph Victory:** It doesn't need to be focused on practicalities. It has to be about shared principles and visions of ultimate goals. In the case of the IRA ceasefire, it only broke down once. Some within the IRA could not accept it. It often did not break but some decided not to be bound by its terms in other organisations. That was a dangerous element at the time, much like the 1998 attack in Omagh and other similar incidences that could be enough to destroy the process. It had the opposite effect however

and made them realise how much they were interested and invested in the process. This violence cannot be determining. It needs a vision to be added to the role of international facilitators. Absolutely, internationals are not always the right way. It worked well but it did not happen easily.

**Participant:** Turkey does not accept any international monitoring at all. Some of us foresee that a monitoring group will be formed among ourselves. What could be the benefit of an internal monitoring group?

**Participant:** The fact that Turkey is not accepting an international monitoring group should be evaluated. Sometimes people are speaking of Masoud Barzani, the head of Iraqi Kurdistan, as speaking on behalf of the Turkish Kurds for international support. The role played by Canada in Northern Ireland could be similar to a role that could be played by Barzani.

**Participant:** The dominant power of the US and Barzani's impact cannot be compared. The US was very willing to solve the Irish problem and so it was very active. Neither Europe nor the US nor any country could get involved in the Turkish-Kurdish process. Turkey needs to find its own solution with its own actors.

**Participant:** The government does not want to see such a committee. It would want to improve its public image though.

**Émer Deane:** Sometimes interesting conversations take place on the margin. There has to be room for wider conversation, for economic or political stream or whatever. If 60 per cent of the public are behind it, there is a need to find language to what the public needs.

Even having a paragraph saying what the public wants could be useful, in a language the Turkish people understand.

**Ralph Victory:** We have to distinguish between the international dimension of government but also individuals. Mitchell was acting on his own authority. He had an independent capacity with his colleagues; he was not giving the US perspective on behalf of the US government. Rather he was a facilitator, bringing people together. After the Good Friday Agreement, at the end of 1999 there were still issues outstanding such as decommissioning. He took the initiative of inviting people to talks on these issues and inviting parties to dinner. He wanted people to get to know each other as people. There was no talk about decommissioning. The role of an international party does not always need to be dramatic or grabbing all headlines. Sometimes it can be very quiet and behind the scenes, just to create the space. It took the British a bit longer to come to that conclusion and have an international dimension. It helped the overall agenda. Finally, it was important to have someone from the US. We also looked to Finland and Canada; we did not just choose or limit ourselves to obvious countries for international support. We had to find someone to be a credible interlocutor, from wherever.

**Kevin Kelly:** This is an interesting discussion. You [Participant] said very clearly that no involvement is wanted. Realities change though. There is the element of timing. Soon there will be a new government in Turkey. Maybe their mind-sets will shift over time, we experienced that too. The role of internationals was not always agreed, but it changed over time. The role of internationals was always around reinforcing the role of main actors, never to take leadership and interfere with the prerogatives or with the main attitudes. It is up to Turkey to decide on the scale of involvement. It does not need to be high level; it can be small, localised technical support.



**Participant:** It is very important to learn about the Irish experience. We had a historic hero, Nasreddin Hoca, and there is a joke about him. He was walking on a roof, slipped and fell down. Everybody gave recommendations, why did you go up on the roof and so on, and he said: 'Stop talking! Find me a man who has just fallen from the roof and I talk with him.' Your experience is more important to us than any other countries'. Thank you!

**Kevin Kelly:** I would not know better words to conclude this session. Thank you!

*End of session*



*Participants with Rory Beatty at Iveagh House, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland*

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Tour of the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament), Houses of the Oireachtas**

Venue: Leinster House, Dublin

With:

**Padraig McGovern**, tour official at Leinster House

**Rory Beatty**, Conflict Resolution Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Participants were shown around the Houses of the Oireachtas in Leinster House by tour guide Padraig McGovern, which was hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They visited the Dáil Éireann, the House of Representatives, and the Seanad Éireann, the Senate, the latter holding sessions in what was previously a ballroom. There were no sessions held at the time of visit.

Participants were particularly amazed by the story of Countess Constance Markievicz, an Irish nationalist and the first woman to be elected to the British House of Commons (without accepting the seat), one of the first women in the world to hold a cabinet position, and a freedom fighter for Irish independence.







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

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Session 4: Roundtable with members of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement**

Venue: Leinster House, Dublin

With:

**Frank Feighan TD**, member of Dáil, Fine Gael

**Ruairí Quinn TD**, member of Dáil, Labour

**Seán Crowe TD**, member of Dáil, Sinn Féin



**Frank Feighan:**<sup>12</sup> This committee was established as part of looking into the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. We look at the Good Friday Agreement when understanding matters. Elements of the agreement are still outstanding. We are also a listening post for communities who feel let down and excluded, and are here to offer advice. We are still playing an important role. Unionist parties have taken the decision to not take part in the committee. Some say they do not have objections. We have, however, still not been successful in getting them involved.

**Ruairí Quinn:**<sup>13</sup> Thanks for having us here.

**Participant:** Who chooses the members of the committee and who gets involved?

**Frank Feighan:** Everyone is involved in the Republic. Most parties in Northern Ireland are on board, except for the DUP.

**Participant:** How many members does it have?

**Frank Feighan:** 50, including those in Northern Ireland. On a good day there are only two to three in from the Nationalist Northern Irish side.

**Participant:** How does the committee operate?

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12 *Frank Feighan was first elected to the Dáil, the Irish Parliament, in 2007 as a member of Fine Gael, a party campaigning for a united Ireland and was elected Chair of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in 2014.*

13 *Ruairí Quinn is a Labour member for the Dáil and has formerly been leader of the Labour Party and Minister for Education and Skills and currently sits on the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.*

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**Frank Feighan:** We meet every two weeks. Sometimes we reach out and invite people like former residents or prisoners. We are working on cross-border operations. In May, ministers of the North and the South are invited to address health services across the borders.

**Participant:** Is it a joint committee with Northern Ireland?

**Frank Feighan:** No.

**Participant:** What legal authority does it have? Does it only prepare a report with recommendations, or does it have legal authority?

**Seán Crowe:**<sup>14</sup> It just gives recommendations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It serves as a listening post for many groups.

**Participant:** Which topics are you mostly focusing?

**Ruairí Quinn:** Our work is part of the rapprochement between Ireland and Northern Ireland. In 1937, with the new constitution in Ireland we had a territorial claim on the whole island, which was hotly disputed. Afterwards, to get the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement, a plebiscite took the form of a 'yes' for the new agreement meant to change the constitution to remove this territorial claim. Three to four years after the final agreement in Northern Ireland, it led to bilateral links between the North and the South. Every six months a ministerial meeting between the two cabinets is held. A joint ministerial meeting succeeds it and there is a permanent secretariat in Omagh, which is the

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<sup>14</sup> *Seán Crowe is an Irish Sinn Féin member of the Dáil and represented the party in the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement and also currently sits on the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.*

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religious capital of the whole island and has a lot of religious symbolism. The work of the committee is part of that overall architecture. We can make recommendations to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Ireland that arises from our deliberations.

**Seán Crowe:** Many of us are also part of the bilateral Anglo-Irish consultation; we have space there to place ideas. There are mechanisms where we can raise issues that are coming up.

**Frank Feighan:** The agreement sometimes calls it an 'Irish solution to Irish problems'. There is some ambiguity to that. Some of the real issues were kicked down the road and these are some of the issues we deal with now.

**Participant:** What is the most difficult subject?

**Frank Feighan:** The most difficult is the legacy, the flag, the marching, the 'on-the-runs' and the ones who committed atrocities and how to deal with them.

**Ruairí Quinn:** I work for the Ministry of Education and we have bilateral meetings with our counterparts. The boundaries between the political entities in the North and South are irregular; it follows the river like any border. So we wanted to facilitate people who felt like they were on the wrong side of the border. We wanted for children aged five to thirteen as well as senior pupils aged 18 to be sent to any school across the border, if they lived five kilometres from the border. We took a survey of parent choice, through the school system, to see what was the interest in having that be possible. There is a very small percentage, five to fifteen per cent, interested in sending their children to schools across the border.

The Northern Irish side had a bias, as they did not want to lose numbers and lose more people.

**Seán Crowe:** For almost 50 to 60 years Northern Ireland was a one-party state with people coming out of conflict. Now there is a lack of trust over simple things; some refuse to talk to each other when they are in the same room. We moved to a forced arrangement with parties sharing power.

**Participant:** The Good Friday Agreement established committees. If you are reviewing your work, what kind of developments or concrete steps, could be taken in what field and do you have examples?

**Frank Feighan:** There is a lack of opportunity in health, education, and infrastructure. It is amazing to see how things have moved apart in the political system, sometimes slower than in society. Mothers of opposing sides can meet where they had different lives just 200m from each other. The political system has not moved as fast in Northern Ireland. It is slower than it should be. I lived in the west of Ireland forty miles from the border. We did not think it [the conflict] was our problem. There was no bloodshed, no violence though we knew what was going on. It was always an issue, but it felt like it was the problem of the UK or outside influencers from Europe. Without their involvement there would have been no agreement.

**Seán Crowe:** Before the Good Friday Agreement there was, per population, the largest amount of British troops in Northern Ireland (higher than in Iraq).

**Ruairí Quinn:** The part of the British army's occupation was deliberately provocative. In Crosmaglen, the British army commandeered the local

football stadium as a helicopter base for twenty years. It was a constant reminder of the occupation to the local population. There were daily provocations from one side or the other. The relation between London and Dublin has never been better; there is no more violence. Outside of the workplace and outside of parliament, it is like two people living in the same house but apart from each other. There is no interaction. That is going to take time.

In Dublin, we have a tourism authority promoting tourism for Ireland and one in Belfast is also doing the same. Both sides agreed to bring them together. Tourism is a big industry for this island and so we try to cooperate in such areas. It is slower than we would like. The Northern Irish minister of education could not meet me on his own without a monitor from the Unionists who wanted to know what was going on. This is a diplomatic reality.

**Frank Feighan:** The RUC was 95 per cent Protestant and Catholics did not trust them. They have now changed it to the PSNI. I met with their chief and you can see that the change is incredible. They are much more nationalist now that the British army is off the streets.

**Participant:** How do you see social class problems?

**Frank Feighan:** They are big. On the Loyalist working class side, the Unionist side, the level of education attainment is very poor. On the nationalist side, through the church or football associations, strive for education is much better. The middle class has left those [Unionist] communities including teachers.

**Ruairí Quinn:** It was a middle class conflict fought by workers on both

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sides. The Protestant, working class was guaranteed employment in Belfast and their shipyard was one of the biggest in the world. After 1922 and even before, jobs were for members of the Loyalists. There was never the same cultural commitment to education. In the prisons where they were kept nationalist, Catholic fighters did Open University studying, long-term study and such, whereas Loyalist internees went to the gym. The prospect of creating employment in Loyalist areas is very weak. This is a constant source of isolation that political leaders exploit.

**Frank Feighan:** The Northern Irish are very involved in the British army, especially the Loyalists. They are just less than two million out of 60 million British people but 20 per cent of the British army is from Northern Ireland. It is the one place to get jobs; there is huge affinity with the British army.

**Seán Crowe:** Both sides used sectarian issues to appeal to workers. In the hungry 1930s, there were attempts to unite workers with employment issues. The sectarian card was used against these attempts. It is a difficulty that the Northern state was built on sectarianism and on discrimination because of religion. In the struggle for housing, for jobs and in every element of society this affiliation was present and this fed into the conflict itself.

**Ruairí Quinn:** A new dimension of insecurity is now the British General Election. The Conservatives want a referendum on EU membership. They had one in the 1970s. The percentage to stay was 67 per cent but now there is a fear that a majority may leave if Cameron does not achieve changes to the European constitution. The result could be very close. If the UK were to leave, there would be a referendum in Scotland for joining the EU. It would immediately isolate the Unionist population in

Northern Ireland, which mostly came from Scotland in 1600s. It could create a whole new instability in terms of identity. When they use 'British' as a word in the UK, they think it to be the same as 'English'. The Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish are very clear about being Welsh and British. In reality it has always been the English empire, however, they just changed the name.

**Participant:** How close or far are you to a final solution?

**Ruairí Quinn:** This is the final solution. The alternative is violence and war.

**Frank Feighan:** I was talking to hard line Unionists. They feel let down by their politicians. There are a lot of friendships now between people who were once shooting and discriminating against each other but there are still huge issues regarding legacy.

**Seán Crowe:** Small groups would want to go back but they have no support. The biggest danger is the slowness of change. The agreement has huge support and expectations; we have to live up to them otherwise people will be angry. The biggest issue to deal with is the past. People have to look forward. We have shared governments; we are beginning to address outstanding issues of the Good Friday Agreement. Demilitarisation has happened now that there is inclusive policing.

**Participant:** Are there social divisions inside the Catholic society? Both in the North and the South, are they more secularists or more religious?

**Frank Feighan:** Very much so. There are a lot of Catholics, but not too many practising Catholics. Religion does not play a big role now. In the

city maybe 10 per cent are attending church, in rural areas maybe 20 to 15 per cent. It is not a huge issue now.

**Ruairí Quinn:** The Catholic Church plays a similar role as the Orthodox Church played for Greece. The fastest growing category in the census is now that of atheists and agnostics. It is the second largest denomination even though 83 per cent are nominally Catholic. One third of marriages take place in a secular context. The momentum is going away. There are three kinds of Catholics: Catholics by conviction, Catholics by culture and Catholics by compulsion. Compulsion, because the Church controls most means of education and 20 per cent of our schools are overcrowded. Parents will have their children baptised for practical reasons not usually for faith.

**Participant:** Are there mixed marriages? Are they treated as a different category?

**Ruairí Quinn:** This used to be difficult. The main reason being that if they would leave their towns, where would they live? On the Catholic or Protestant side? Some would emigrate to England maybe.

**Frank Feighan:** England was the destination for liberals, as we did not even have divorce. The Irish solution to divorce was working in London.

**Seán Crowe:** It differs in terms of background, whether it is middle class or working class. For the middle class it was easier to form relationships across borders. During the conflict, it was particularly difficult for the working class depending on the areas they lived in. There was a chance of one's home being attacked on the basis of inter-marriage.

**Ruairí Quinn:** There is one tragic incident that I can remember. A Catholic woman had a second relationship with a Protestant. She had three or four children and a firebomb was thrown into the house, which killed all children. This act was condemned but all it takes is one crazy person like that to get such a reaction.

**Seán Crowe:** It was a wakeup call for many regarding what we could slip back into. Something positive came out of the tragedy.

**Kerim Yildiz:** How did you find assistance from the international community during the course of the negotiations and also after the Good Friday Agreement?

**Ruairí Quinn:** The Irish nationalists since 1850 were mobilising the Irish diaspora in the US, parts of England and Australia. Most significant was the American President. The Irish had strong ties with politics, particularly with the Democrats. Churchill wanted to invade the South of Ireland because of German U-boats but Roosevelt had elections in 1940 and Churchill understood that there was no way he could do it without breaking relations even if it was for good reasons. Bill Clinton and Ted Kennedy also played a big role.

**Frank Feighan:** There is supposed to be a diaspora of 75 million. It is similar to Turkey who has a diaspora; they keep commitment and love to their country. Sometimes this is even strengthened in the diaspora. There was funding in the diaspora and this economic dimension definitely helped.

**Seán Crowe:** The UK wanted to keep it an internal problem. Bringing outsiders in, internationalising, was important for those who did not



trust the British. Clinton related it to the civil rights movement in the US. Involving international elements was a key factor.

**Kerim Yildiz:** How could the UK be persuaded? It was prohibited for Sinn Féin to travel.

**Frank Feighan:** Civil society in positions of influence pushed the political system to see both sides.

**Ruairí Quinn:** Gerry Adams was prevented from going to the US because of the IRA even after the ceasefire. The White House appointed Kennedy's sister as ambassador in Dublin. As ambassador, she recommended to give Adams a visa. The State Department was completely opposed; they valued the relationship with Great Britain more but politics overruled diplomacy. With the Irish lobby, the Democrats in Congress and the Democratic president they had more votes than the State Department.

**Seán Crowe:** This is still a problem in the State Department today. It is not a positive actor for change in Ireland.

*End of session*

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Dinner Reception with International Guests at  
the Shelbourne Hotel**

**Venue:** The Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin

With:

**His Excellency Necip Egüz**, Turkish Ambassador to Ireland

**Sir David Reddaway**, former British Ambassador to Ireland,  
member of DPI Council of Experts



**Kerim Yildiz:** We are happy to support the work of DPI and its advisory board. DPI, rather than solely talking about issues, brings people together and allows them to get to know each other. By inviting journalists and Wisemen, DPI aims at preparing society for peace. We try to have you meet as many people involved in the Irish question as possible, particularly in light of the role of international actors. Meeting with Senator Mitchell will be a great opportunity, as his principles have gained acceptance around the world. Hopefully on this trip, we can come together ourselves.

**His Excellency Necip Egüz:** We would like to thank DPI for inviting those guests from Turkey, guests from the thinking and media world. Previous guests have said that they were happy at the end of their visits to Ireland. Turkey is going through an important process and it is now up to Turkey whether it can have a breakthrough. We have to prepare for a better future, for more democracy and to go forward. I myself would like to support the process as an individual as well as a civil servant.

**Sir David Reddaway:** I spent three happy years in Ireland after three happy years in Turkey. Just as DPI recognises, every situation is different. Thus, this visit is also taking place under the recognition that Ireland is different from Turkey. I welcome the efforts that have been made, they are difficult and they take time. But I see progress in Turkey and hopefully the political will is sufficient.

**Kerim Yildiz:** I would specifically like to welcome Ali Bayramoğlu at the table. Thank you for your huge contribution to DPI, both practical and theoretical.

**Ali Bayramoğlu:** When DPI started its activities in Turkey, it was under different conditions. Today we are discussing an international monitoring board and we can easily discuss such issues. This is a major improvement. We started when the Turkish intelligentsia was accused of being agents or spies if things like that were suggested. Now the discussion is recognised as important.

*End of session*

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

**Session 5: Roundtable with former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern:  
The Good Friday Agreement Negotiations**

**Venue:** The Skylon Hotel, Drumcondra, Dublin, Ireland

With:

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



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

**Kerim Yildiz:** Bertie Ahern was Taoiseach from June 1997 to May 2008. Before that he served as an MP, as Minister of Labour from 1987 to 1991 and as Minister of Finance from 1991 to 1994. During the course of his time as a politician, he has been involved in the peace process and has worked to bring peace to Ireland together with other international actors. He stresses that it is important to have international assistance, to have them involved and to have an inclusive process. His experience goes beyond Ireland and he also worked closely with George Mitchell. We will be trying to concentrate on one area, particularly the role of the assistance of international actors. There is the standard phrase that all situations are different. However, for the thirty conflicts of the last twenty years there are common things that they can learn from each other

**Bertie Ahern:** Welcome to my part of Dublin. This is where I am from, where I went to school and where I represented parliament for 34 years. I am still involved in the community here. I have met delegations from Turkey previously and I know a little bit of your issues. I also know that you have elections in June. They always create their own tensions and problems. I stood in ten national elections and the great thing about them is that they come and go.

I will talk a bit about Northern Ireland today, although I am now involved in other conflicts with people like Jonathan Powell amongst others. It is always worth repeating that no two conflicts are the same. Each has its own character and features. There are some similar elements of our situation in Ireland and supposedly every conflict. Nobody in the world can be an expert in conflict resolution, even George Mitchell, who was so helpful in Northern Ireland but then he got invited to get involved in the Middle East. I think he was glad to finish that job as it proved to be a different conflict. I spent a lot of time in Ukraine last year and we spent

time with Jonathan Powell in the Basque country. The only thing that's always similar is that all conflicts are about people. If you are trying to do something about conflicts, rather than waste your time, I believe that there has to be broad acceptance by people, parties, groups involved and that the status quo is untenable and some sort of agreement will be better. Otherwise you would better go home.

In the case of Ireland, we had to convince people that killing is not a good idea. That takes time and trust. The key lesson is the need to be inclusive and as comprehensive as possible in terms of people involved in the conflict. There are sensitive issues, with governments in particular, who a sovereign government can deal with and whom they can sit down with. There cannot be a sense that you can bomb your way to the negotiating table. An elected government cannot just negotiate with anyone. We in Ireland insisted that no party currently involved in violence, directly or indirectly, could be part of the peace process. You wanted to include everyone you can but not unconditionally. This is not just a basic moral principle but it is also practical politics. People would not participate if there may be a bomb under the table or if you could get shot at the door. You can take risks. If political leaders, like Blair and I, had taken the view that people who are absolutely pure and who never used violence should be the only ones involved we would have never made any progress. Most of the people we dealt with were involved in violence. They had a track record of violence. Our job was to get them to say that this was over. There were many attempts in this country to try to make peace agreements with people who were only involved in peaceful means and excluded violent people. All of these attempts failed. The hard work about a peace process is bringing in those involved in violence. It is not that difficult to bring in people who are anti-violence. Otherwise violent people outside will say that we are wasting their time. I could quote tons of examples.

I want to emphasise a key lesson that I learned, something I did not know before. Dialogue is the only way forward if profound differences, like in Northern Ireland, are to be managed and resolved. I want to stress my belief in on-going dialogue as the best way to build peace. You cannot persuade people to stop violence if you do not communicate with them. I cannot understand a government believing that you can stop people without talking to them. Maybe the Prime Minister cannot talk to them but somebody else may be able to. It does not work very well otherwise. It is like people getting married that never talk, that will not last long. This is hard sometimes because you do not like them or they may have done terrible things, like murder for example and they have blood on their hands, but if you want to stop them you have to communicate. It is hard; it sometimes comes from the heart. You must say it's a terrible thing to do but that it may be for the common good. I always tell this story: one day when I was in the North for talks, I was dealing with people called hard people, tough ones, with all 12 of their leaders in the room. One notorious person, a tough individual, said to me, "to the best of our knowledge you are the only one in this room who has not murdered somebody." It was reassuring that I was the odd one out. I wondered if it's a good idea to be in this room. But that is what you have to do to find a solution.



*Guest speaker Bertie Ahern*

After a long conflict, it is important that paramilitaries involved in violence are given an exit strategy because it is difficult to stop what they have been doing for years. Some of these paramilitaries are bright and intelligent, others not, and some do not know how to stop and get out. Leaders have to find a way out. You have to work with them to move from violence to peace, to a democratic process. Get them to call a ceasefire and then move to the next process to say 'never again.' A further lesson is comprehensiveness in terms of issues that should be incorporated. A small number of issues, particularly in long and protracted negotiations, are always easier to handle if you are chairing and mediating. Dealing with as many as possible is better though. You cannot say it is 10 or 15 issues but it is better to deal with them at an early stage. We finished the Good Friday Agreement negotiations on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1998 but it took us until 2007 to implement the issues. Sometimes the easy part is the negotiations rather than implementation, as Mitchell said. I spent nine years of my life involved in negotiations, seven days a week, trying to implement. The more you put up from day one, the easier it is. I spent



most of my time early as Minister of Labour so I spent all my time negotiating with employers, farmers and trade unionists. We were trying to get agreements for economic problems, including labour laws and national strikes and things like that.

When you are an advocate of peace and try to convince people to move on the peace road you are putting yourself in the shoes of the others in the negotiation. A good negotiator is not someone who goes in saying “this is my view, this is what I said, get out if you do not like us,” like Margret Thatcher, who was useless in my view anyway, God bless her. If you try to dominate, it is okay, if you only take your own side. If you try to make progress then you have to understand their position. We all have biases and feelings about what we think of people but you have to try to understand their argument if you want to understand them. Why do they go out and risk their lives? Why would people pack a car with explosives and a timer in their hand, driving through a city with the risk of blowing themselves up? Why would they go out at night with a machine gun to take on the might of the British army and risk their lives? Some say those are suicide cases. No. Are they mad? – No. Something motivates them. You have to get inside of them to find out how you can change that.

I did that with parties in the North. I did not like some of the people and their politics and the fact that they were so British and did not share my culture. Still I ended up friends with a lot of them and very good friends with some of them.

The chairman asked me to say something about external players. I believe this is a key question. There is no doubt that the contribution of the EU and the US was crucial. Clinton’s help was critical at times and the fact

that Clinton gave us Mitchell, a good man, was extremely vital. Mitchell's wisdom, humour, patience, tact and decisiveness were indispensable. This commitment came from the involvement of a huge number of Irish people who lived in the US. It is our diaspora. The EU helped with resources with John de Chateleine was in charge of decommissioning for several years. A reality of today is that every issue is connected globally. I had a chance of travelling and speaking in lots of places in my career. I spoke to the US Congress' joint houses and in Westminster. Those honours were not for me, despite it being a good opportunity for me personally, but it had implications beyond our shores. It is not just the question of whether the external dimension is valuable because the wider world also has something to gain from access to the process. In my honest opinion, the conflict in Ireland would have never been solved without external players. Nor will the conflict involving Basque Country and Freedom organisation (ETA), an armed Basque nationalist and separatist group, in the Basque country Spain be solved without externals, as is also the case in Syria and Iraq. Mitchell said about Ireland that they were always fighting the British. There were many attempts for a process and it worked for a while but was crushed by the British. It then returned back to fighting in the next generation.

We always have to keep working and the day you stop working on the peace process is a dangerous day. If you believe that fighting will not reoccur, it is dangerous. I always think it is strange with a government, including my own. If there is a big war out in the streets and people shoot each other, the government will have no problem getting the army, police, aeroplanes and tanks involved, not worrying about costs and supplying thousands of people. But when there is peace and you want the government to invest to keep that peace: in education, in motivating people, trying to make people live together, share cultural differences,

the government says there is no money for those things. It is a pity. Prevention is better than a cure.

Mitchell used to say we had experience with violence in Northern Ireland because we spent hundreds of years fighting but there is no common history of the same historical event. There are different views by people about how events started.

Civil society, employers, trade unions all worked with us and worked hard to communicate with people. It was helpful to us because sometimes politicians cannot do this. They were very useful in trying to engage people. The more people talk about issues the better. Nothing is more important than working for peace. We all only have one life. I wish you well, you have a great country. I hope you can find ways of moving forward with your issues.

## **Kerim Yildiz opens the floor for questions.**

**Participant:** About the Good Friday Agreement, some authors say there was 53 per cent public support. What is the current situation?

**Bertie Ahern:** We put it to a vote in the North and the South. In the North approval was about 60 per cent and in the South it was 94 per cent for and six per cent against. That is a big difference. The reasons for the 'no' votes in the North were that one of the parties, the DUP, did not support it. They came on our side in 2006. After that all parties were on side. Support is now 95 per cent in the whole of Ireland.

**Participant:** Related to the Kurdish question in Turkey, the solution in Ireland is teaching us many things. On the one hand, you were carrying out negotiations but were you calling the people who you negotiated with, terrorists? Were you using discriminatory language? That is what we face in Turkey. Dialogue is going on but authorities say we must liquidate and we must kill the terrorists. Instead of saying that we must reach peace they say they want to eliminate the problem of terror. Because of this approach from the Justice and Development Party, they and the HDP are attacking each other with very violent words, creating tension. What recommendations for style and language used do you have? Did you have a list of terrorist organisations and did you exclude IRA from this terror list?

**Bertie Ahern:** This is a crucial issue. You must be as inclusive as possible. If you do not include people you are not going to stop them from engaging in violence. First we set principles, the Mitchell Principles, which says that you cannot come into negotiations until you say you have stopped violence. You have to disengage from this day from activities that we know you did in past. You have to sign yourself to peaceful means. We used to say you could not have the Armalite in one hand and the ballot box in the other. You need to leave violence behind. For me, to ask you to sign but still call you a terrorist and go after you would not work. You have to say if you want to be in the process, sign up, then you are part of the talks (or your political party can be). The IRA was never at the talks, Sinn Féin was; sometimes those were the same people. I say the opposite side of a coin. I said to Gerry Adams, 'you have a meeting with the IRA, go there is a mirror!' For those who did not sign the Mitchell principles, then it is fair for the government to say, 'we go after you'.

We still have a small number of people in Northern Ireland who are

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involved in violence. The government has to go after them. If you were involved in violence in the 30 years it was hard for leaders in talks to control their members outside. There were breaches of the Mitchell principles. Like in football we had the red card principles. Here you were suspended if your friends engaged in violence and there would be a period before you could go back in. Sometimes we were criticised. Some said 'we told you so, they are not committed, we gave them chances'. The same happened when Tony and I left out prisoners, people said to us 'you are mad.' You left out all the murderers. But the fact is that practically all prisoners never reoffended, even 18 years later. Only a small number of them did. It is not true that it is impossible to convince people. Some are mad and some are maniacs.

My advice would be to follow the system and principles (if you stick to the rules you are allowed in, if you breach them you are thrown out) and then engage in talks and work with them. It was the same with Basque Country and Freedom organisation (ETA); the Spanish government will not deal with them until they stop the violence. This experience is echoed throughout the whole world; if you go out and kill all the terrorists, their sons and daughters are the next generation so you will not solve the problem. The British made that mistake from the year 1100. In the case of Sri Lanka, all insurgents were killed. But their sons and daughters will come back and continue the fight. The IRA was on the Irish, European and US terrorist list during negotiations until the end. I went to the Americans and convinced them to allow Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams and others, to travel to the US. The State Department said they were terrorists and that they would never change and that they were mad.

**Participant:** During the process were there moments when you had real difficulty making decisions? What is the most difficult point as a decision-maker? We do not have negotiations yet. How did you make the first definitions? How did you set up the first demands? How did you establish a first kind of trust?

**Bertie Ahern:** Most of our early contact with paramilitary organisation was private. Most was done with a small group of people who were assigned to meet with them privately. Some of the early meetings were organised by religious people on both sides with no media in secret. The locations were secret and there were no reports out of it. If paramilitary groups are disciplined, which they usually are, there are no leaks from them. It is only when you meet political parties that there is leaking. Those first talks lasted for many years. The hard bit was then convincing them that they had to sign up to peaceful means and that they must be ready to go down the road of peace. That was difficult. People you are talking to may be okay but the ones they represent may not be. That is a political risk for the government. It is easy for me to sit now and say we have to take that risk but it was a big worry at the time. One Christmas, before the negotiations, IRA/Sinn Féin had asked me if I could release some of their prisoners for Christmas for 72 hours. The official advice was 'no' and the minister of justice would not sign the orders as he was afraid. But I signed them the day before Christmas Eve. I had to wait until the prisoners came back. If they did not do it I would have been gone but we knew when they did come back that we could trust them.

The release of prisoners was difficult. We did not release them until a year after the Good Friday Agreement. I was releasing prisoners down here who had 40 years in prison for shooting a policeman. If you release someone who has shot police officers you had to go and meet the relatives

to explain. That was difficult because they were never going to agree but getting them to listen was only thing you could do. If we did not do those things we would have ended up on the daily news. The news was all: 'item number one, 'who was shot?' item number two, 'which bombs and where?' and so on. Would I listen to that for the rest of my life or take some risks? The easiest thing to say was, 'I hate terrorists, we should kill them all, hang them'. That would have been easier but would that have stopped anything? Those are the tough choices.

**Participant:** Some parties avoid participating in the process. In such circumstances, what should we do? And secondly, will involvement of the opposition not make the process dependent on the opposition?

**Bertie Ahern:** We kept on trying because we knew we had to challenge those people who did not participate. My phrase was, 'why are you afraid of peace?' What is wrong with peace and with people staying alive? It will get them if you keep at it. One of the biggest problems in the North was Paisley.<sup>15</sup> He did not sign up to the 1998 agreement, he was outside the gate when we were signing shouting abuse at us, 'traitors'. He did not join the talks for eight years. We had to keep encouraging him to commit to the talks. He was not directly involved in violence but he had big influence over the paramilitaries. The paramilitaries supporting him were in the talks before him. He had the most number of votes for years as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). He was a political leader of religious influence and the things he said encouraged violence. There are always a small percentage of those that no matter what you say will have violence become their life and their business.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ian Paisley was a Protestant religious leader from Northern Ireland and an Irish unionist politician who founded the DUP in 1971 and was the leader of the party for almost 40 years.*

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They are in trafficking, drugs and bank robberies. The police can normally manage them if political motivations are gone.

**Participant:** Which communication strategies have you developed to encourage participation of civil society? Did you pick certain organisations?

**Bertie Ahern:** We did two or three things. There were many organisations over the period of the Troubles. Civil rights people who were concerned about housing problems were involved because they were there. There was a group called the 'Women's Coalition'. Their work was one of the best as it spread out into families, schools and communities. We also involved trade union leaders, employers, farmer leaders, sports people, musicians, journalists, writers as well as anyone else who would help the cause. Most of these people were never involved in politics. All the public could hear was the Troubles. People did not talk about education or about the economy and many turned off listening to that. It was good to have people talking about other issues. We went as broad as we could. We were encouraging them without making it seem like we did that. Trade unions, religious people and community leaders were our main focus. It was helpful to get another audience.

**Participant:** What was the impact of the press?

**Bertie Ahern:** Press correspondents from the whole world were talking about the horrors. When it came to the Good Friday Agreement, we spoke directly to editorial teams of all media. We went to them saying 'whatever your differences with us normally is about politics but please report about the Good Friday Agreement, about opportunities'. The press was wonderful and very supportive. They wrote many articles in



support of the Agreement and they supported publicity of events we were involved in. I always said that in Northern Ireland the most read document was the Good Friday Agreement because people everywhere read it, people who would never read a political article still read it. The media helped to do that. I had plenty of differences with the media but the Good Friday Agreement was not one of them.

**Participant:** In Turkey today, international monitoring or third party intervention is not allowed between Öcalan<sup>16</sup> and the government. The People's Democratic Party (HDP) is ensuring his connection with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) by visiting him. The government did accept to form a national monitoring delegation but they are not allowing an international one. Do you think a national committee is enough, or do we need a third party?

**Bertie Ahern:** I never like to recommend to other governments what to do. However, an international body is almost essential from my experience. If it had been left to us in Ireland, with the British, we would not have solved it. No doubt. In the Basque country, where I was part of an international group, again a solutions process would not have happened.

**Participant:** I want to support your approach about international involvement. I just want to remind you that Turkey was involved in the Philippines. Turkey gets involved in other countries so it should also allow other parties in their own domestic affairs.

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16 *Abdullah* Öcalan is one of the founding members of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) who is currently imprisoned but still remains a key negotiator in Turkey's solution process.

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**Bertie Ahern:** It isn't rocket science. Take a look at the talks with Iran where there is a multinational group with the Chinese. Another example would be in North Korea where there is an international group involved. You can see it anywhere in the world. You could argue that where certain people are either completely not involved or only go in a little bit, like in Syria, it does not work. If people went in early in Syria, when it was just protests, they could have made some progress in the first six months out in comparison to looking unsolvable. Aung San Su Kyi said that being free is what international actors have made possible. You rarely hear about the country in the media now. The reason is simple enough; governments have fixed positions about situations. They have said so much for so long that it is hard for them to reverse those positions whereas international actors can deal with things differently.

**Participant:** Did you mention the issue of amnesty during the negotiations? What kind of reactions did you get?

**Bertie Ahern:** The only amnesty was releasing prisoners. We released them on license, so not unconditionally. If you were guilty of reoffending, you went back to jail to serve your sentence. That was the amnesty. If you were on a ten-year sentence, and some were, and you reoffended you were back for fifteen years (very few of the released prisoners reoffended). Prisoners became crucial in selling peace on the ground. It was hugely important that they involved themselves in their own communities on the peaceful side of things. It was a risk because if they became agitated or created difficulties we would have been hammered but they became advocates of peace in their communities.

One issue about arms: we did not handle decommissioning very well in the Good Friday Agreement. We said we would set up an international

commission with John de Chastelain and others but we were not precise about how this should be done. This turned into a difficult, messy position. It took us a long time to hand in the paramilitaries' weapons. If we could do it over again, we would have been far clearer on how to deal with arms. The IRA had huge stockpiles of arms given to them by Gadhafi because he hated the British and so he gave large shipments to the IRA. They still had them when the Good Friday Agreement passed. This took a long time to resolve. We left it loose and grey because it was a torturous issue. We got the IRA and other groups to agree to allow arms inspectors who were secretly brought the arms and marked them. Inspectors went back every now and then to see whether they had been used.

Some of the IRA leaders who were responsible for the arms came to the conclusion to get rid of them rather than having to take responsibility to protect those big arms themselves. I am not suggesting that you should demand that they are all given over in one day but it better be clear on how it is to be done.

**Participant:** Did you perhaps only have the agreement because such items were vague?

**Bertie Ahern:** It was not that but rather having so many other issues. Everyone said if we get peace and nobody is using arms the issues would die. They did not. The information came out about how many arms the IRA actually had and that they had received five shipments from Gadhafi, of which only one was caught and the other four were buried somewhere.

**Kerim Yildiz:** Should some have laid down their arms as a condition before moving to negotiations?

**Bertie Ahern:** You know my opinion. That means telling the groups to surrender. I got to know them. Leaders of the IRA who had fought for 30 years had many of their friends who were killed or were in jail, who were separated from their families or had ran off to the US or Australia, and you want to tell them to give up their arms first? I would not do that. 'What guerrilla leader will surrender? I fought for 30 years!' That was one answer and I agreed with him.

**Participant:** Two months ago, our Prime Minister made a gesture to the guerrillas to go down the mountain. It was a gesture to disarm their minds. Also two months ago, a university student had participated in PKK fighting in Syria and then returned to Urfa. His father who wanted to save him from the PKK kidnapped him. He then sent an invitation to the Prime Minister to go to his wedding. I attended that wedding. We gave a call to the wife and kids and parents, congratulated them and gave them a present. Did you experience similar incidents? What kind of impact could it have? Is it important to purify their minds, to make them say I do not want that? How influential are gestures?

**Bertie Ahern:** Any symbolic act can work. Ultimately, you purify their minds by dealing with the causes of the trouble. Paramilitaries do not go out to get killed for fun. They believe in their cause and motivations. We thus need to deal with inequalities and causes and injustice. Northern Ireland was discrimination. Houses and grants were given to Protestants whereas Catholics were discriminated against and this was the underlying reason causing all the trouble. Those are the kind of things you have to challenge in negotiations. I was involved in many secret meetings and gestures and in the end we negotiated the main elements. We completely changed the police force and set up equality on the agenda. A new criminal and justice system including the police force would no longer

be 99 per cent Protestant. Symbolism helps but the solution is dealing with causes.

**Participant:** In Turkey, there is a widely discussed issue that there will be no solution without press freedom. Some say we have an authoritarian leadership. Do you consider this an obstacle to the peace process?

**Bertie Ahern:** I know some of your leaders. With Thatcher, we would not have solved the problem. You need someone to be prepared to enter into dialogue. Any leader anywhere, even if it's Putin, will want to see progress. I have friends involved in North Korea, which is really authoritarian, but they are slowly working towards finding a solution. It may take a long time.

I wish you well in your efforts. Elections always raise tensions but they will be over in a few months. Hopefully the PKK do not cause any trouble.

*End of Session*

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

**Session 6: Roundtable Discussion with Liz O'Donnell:**

**The Mitchell Principles in Practice**

Venue: The Skylon Hotel, Drumcondra

With:

**Liz O'Donnell,**<sup>17</sup> Former Minister of State



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*17 Liz O'Donnell was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland in 1997, with responsibility for Overseas Development Assistance and Human Rights. She was among the representatives of the Irish Government at the multi-party talks at Stormont, which culminated in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.*

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*Participants with guest speaker Liz O'Donnell*

**Kerim Yildiz:** Liz O'Donnell worked closely with Bertie Ahern, Tony Blair and George Mitchell. We try to concentrate again on the role of international actors, in terms of her perspective as a member of the Irish government and the lessons they learned from the Irish experience.

**Liz O'Donnell:** About my background: When I became minister in 1997 there was no peace process; it was blown off course by the Canary Wharf bomb in London. The previous government had worked hard to keep the peace process going and discussions had been on going in Northern Ireland but there was no ceasefire. When we came into government, there were two new governments under Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern and my party was the smaller coalition partner. When I was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs we would normally deal with Anglo-Irish relations. It was not apparent that I would be involved because the negotiations ceased.

On 20<sup>th</sup> July the second IRA ceasefire was announced and we were back in business. I received a message from my party leader to get involved. It was a challenge as I had not previously been involved in any detailed way with the Anglo-Irish peace negotiations. We had it on good authority that the IRA and Sinn Féin were happy to try again. After about twelve weeks from the start of the ceasefire, during a period of decontamination, it seemed to be steady and not just cosmetic. The two governments went to Northern Ireland and George Mitchell came back and we started negotiating. We were not starting with a blank page. Lots of work had been done by the previous two governments, Reynolds'<sup>18</sup> government since the first ceasefire and the previous one. A lot of working papers were finalised, broadly outlining a possible settlement. These working documents are probably the most important thing. The solution we eventually reached was a masterpiece of drafting. When you think of the diversity of people to satisfy and the disputed areas, the drafting was an exercise not for parties but governments. They came in because they were experts of drafting and were the best people in Blair's office as well as the British and Irish foreign services. They were notoriously talented at drafting. The Prime Ministers were completely focused on this exercise and there was nothing more important from the two governments. We had two new governments and two young Prime Ministers with fresh mandates who were committed with all of their staff.

There were two aspects, first being to frame a replacement for the Anglo-Irish agreement, a new constitutional agreement between the UK and Ireland in relation to Northern Ireland. It was a big drafting exercise. It dealt with constitutional changes and changes in legislation to reflect the totality of the two countries relationship. The second aspect was the

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18 Albert Reynolds was Prime Minister of Ireland 1992-94 and head of Fianna Fáil, an Irish Republican Party.

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conflict resolution process, which was not just a political exercise and people were being killed. The fractured paramilitary war was going on. Progress at first was slowed down by the fact that we could not make progress on conflict resolution. We had to balance the new agreement between the governments' needs and the need to end the violence. It was a fallible process and some were less sure than others about the bona fides of Sinn Féin. They were not very involved in politics at the time. 16 years later, they are successful. At the time, as far as the Irish government was concerned, they were terrorists. They planted bombs in our cities and in the UK. There was distrust. The government in Ireland had to be careful not to compromise democratic values which was risky. The peace process was never easy and never smooth sailing. It could have all blown up in our faces and we could have made fools of ourselves as a sovereign government. People could place a bomb at any time and kill any progress we would have made.

The help of outside actors was useful. We had the United States, which was hugely supportive. The Irish diaspora is big in the United States and Irish Americans were fully supportive to march right into the Oval Office. The State Department did what they could and Madeleine Albright used her influence and put pressure on Sinn Féin through their contacts. A lot of funding to Sinn Féin came from the US. That friendship between governments was crucial. It was most manifested by them sending us George Mitchell. He, more than any other actor, was able to bring the parties around a table representing the different stances of Northern Ireland. Through his skills he was able to bring people to a state where they could find accommodation for others.

It was not as if it was an El Dorado or an ideal ending. It was tough and people had to abandon long-held positions. Nationalism, which

was broadly the SDLP, the Irish government and Sinn Féin's position, was not compatible with British Unionists. We were hoping to achieve a settlement of those differences with the view to look forward to a fair settlement. There should be parity of contribution and gain from the outcome, according to Mitchell. Everybody should feel like they get something out of the negotiations. What was most difficult was that the parties were not in a good place of trust. They all had their constituencies that made them very nervous. The Unionists were extremely nervous and terrified to be seen as conceding with terrorists. They were negotiating down, risking democratic values and electoral support by negotiating. For that reason, a huge cohort of the Unionist community, the DUP, was outside of the negotiations, under 'Mr No', Ian Paisley. It was a difficult position for that party. We looked at the negotiations as an opportunity for Sinn Féin to come out of the margins and to come into the democratic room but Sinn Féin still had a massive arsenal, sufficient to blow up the centre of London. People were saying 'How come we are negotiating with those people, they must be committed to decommissioning'. It was a huge issue.

We finished negotiating the settlement without actually getting decommissioned. We dealt with it by having agreement, in principle form, between Sinn Féin and other paramilitaries explaining that they would deal with a decommissioning body under de Chastelain<sup>19</sup> who would oversee the decommissioning. There would be verifiable decommissioning of their arsenal by an independent body. It was important to have independent oversight to build confidence in the participants.

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<sup>19</sup> *General John de Chastelain was a Canadian diplomat and soldier who became involved in the Irish peace process and from 1997 – 2011 became Chairman of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning.*

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The issue had always been giving up guns. First, they had to maintain the ceasefire and then forego their arsenal, which proved more difficult than anticipated. Sinn Féin was reluctant because they saw it as an outcome, not a condition of negotiations. This was their militaristic position. We constantly were in a state to persuade the Unionists to stay in the negotiations and that it was worth the risk if the outcome was peace. It was high risk politically. At the end, the DUP had overtaken the Unionists who were in the negotiations. It was the people who took the risks for peace who did not do well politically. They lost all their Westminster seats. When institutions were established the DUP actually achieved power. This is a big irony. It was not good for the participants who took risks, who were courageous and moderate. In the end the extremes did better politically. We have to live with that. It is not fair, history will be kinder to those parties who took such risk and gave up so much.

Decommissioning was ultimately to de Chastelain and his colleagues, who always said it was more about the decommissioning of mind-sets. If the mind were not wholly committed to peace, decommissioning would be a charade. George Mitchell tried to bring the paramilitaries into a space where these principles were embedded and where they could see that politics was working rather than guns. It required a huge degree of leadership in the Sinn Féin party. They were willing to actually make a settlement but they were demanding. They wanted the best possible outcome for all their agenda, their inequality agenda. There was unfairness in terms of jobs and discrimination against Catholics. There had been reasons for unhappiness and political fractioning. Civil rights of Catholics had not been recognised by the British. When they campaigned peacefully led by John Hume<sup>20</sup> in the 1960s, the British government's response was

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20 *Founding member of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and one of the main architects of the peace process*

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not good. The army reacted in a militaristic way as we saw with Bloody Sunday where civilians were shot in the streets. There were faults on all sides. It resulted in a long and dirty war between paramilitaries and the British government. We also had fatalities down here in the Republic. It was a subversive group undermining the Irish government, which it did not recognise. They were shooting army and police members and often civilians. For such a long period, even though Ireland was economically thriving there was this monkey on our back. It was a long-term problem preventing investment and it meant lives were lost. The war on our island was unnecessary because it was capable of being resolved in negotiations.

At the beginning of the negotiations, there was a lot of fear about the fundamental dilemma of negotiating with terrorists. Once we overcame that, Sinn Féin was willing to make a settlement. There was fatigue on both sides; the UK was fed up with their cities being blown up and their soldiers being killed. They finally realised *realpolitik* and that they could not win this war by security measures. This took a long time. John Major, to a certain extent, authorised the beginning of the ceasefire negotiations. This took 10 years of secret approaches to the IRA with the view to ceasefire settlement. It happened through trusted intermediaries, which was important for all peace processes, which could operate on good authority from the two governments to tease out ways if there was goodwill. There was a lot of support once it started to make progress and there was will to throw a lot of civil service and diplomats to work on a settlement.

Negotiations started in September and it took two months before we agreed on an agenda. An agenda has headings and people will object to even seeing cross-border bodies or decommissioning there. It was difficult to agree on the agenda. Nothing was agreed until everything was agreed.

We could talk of power sharing, decommissioning and so on and it could be discussed without prejudice. There was a benefit to get people talking without fear. The disadvantage means that you are not really making progress and you cannot tick off points. It is a recipe for procrastination. It would have been great if Mitchell could have ticked one off after the other but nothing was agreed before everything was agreed and we could not buy in before they saw everything. It was all-interdependent.

What we talked about was massive. We talked about the whole of Northern Ireland's government, of mandatory power sharing and of a participatory government of forced power sharing based on a specific formula of the D'Hont system. The negotiations had three strands: firstly new internal arrangements in Northern Ireland, secondly the North-South arrangement and thirdly East-West between the UK and Ireland. When it all came together, the Irish government was not involved in the internal Northern Irish setting; this was a matter for the UK and Northern Ireland. I was involved in the North-South strand. We would have cross-border bodies. We would allow greater cooperation and representation. I was also involved in the East-West strand. When it all came together, the scale of everything envisaged was shockingly big. There was a difficulty in implementation. It meant total reformation of relations and involved everything from changing the legislative system, government arrangements, the judicial system, the equality platform, housing and the employment of previously unfair governance.

When we signed in 1998 it was only the beginning. The outside world thought that it was all over. History showed that it would be many years until the totality of matters agreed were implemented. It took ages before we had total decommissioning. It took almost the same amount of time before there was the governance that we had envisaged. It was work

in progress for a long time and not for the faint-hearted. There were highlights and lowlights and days when we thought it would never work. What made it strong was the mandate by the referendum in Ireland and the North, which voted for the agreement. It gave the agreement a certain degree of popular authority. It gave the security of knowing no matter how difficult it was, it was mandated and nobody had been forced.

### **Kerim Yildiz opens the floor for questions.**

**Participant:** From start to end, can you provide information about the power of women in the process?

**Liz O'Donnell:** The negotiations were loaded in favour of women and small parties. The Northern Irish women's coalition had two negotiators, the same as big parties. It was a liberating thing in Northern Ireland. Parties were very tribal and fixed for so many years. They had no imagination, no professional or academic experience. Women came from across the sides, from wider civil society. Some were nurses, social workers and academics. Women were poorly represented in the big parties in Northern Ireland. They would not have been at the table. Not one of the Unionist negotiators were woman. What they brought to the table was not just gender but also professional expertise coming from their jobs in law or academia. They were very good at helping governments to overcome obstacles in the process. That is something political parties are not very good at as they were too fixed in tribal resolutions and fixed positions and had no experience in negotiating. The elected people in Northern Ireland were excellent at articulating their own position but

had little capability of putting themselves in the place of the other side, of understanding the other perspective. Women brought flexibility to the table and an open perspective that was not based on tribalism and history. They were common sense women with an open mind. It made a difference and it was liberating.

There was also space for smaller parties, for labour, smaller Loyalist parties and for two small Unionist parties who were paramilitary groups. It was about widening the discussion and bringing in people from the margins, which was just as important as bringing in Sinn Féin. It was important to involve small paramilitary groups who had no party. Women in particular made a deliberate and comprehensive contribution. The fact that Mo Mowlam and I were female ministers was a coincidence. She was the first to have an understanding of the nationalist grievances but was not from the conservative establishment in England. The British government was ultimately fair and open to reach accommodation. She was like that personally too. The two Prime Ministers had a good relationship as well. They were both young and ambitious.

To go back to women, they were useful. My only regret was that when the normal elections started after the peace process, the Women's Coalition failed electorally. When it came to the tough real world of electoral politics in Northern Ireland the Women's Coalition did not survive. People voted for traditional parties. It would have been good to have them help implementing.

**Participant:** Were there plans to integrate the idea of peace into the educational system?

**Liz O'Donnell:** This is one of my big regrets. It had little political support. It would make sense to sustain peace by introducing education about peace, power sharing, respect for diversity and so on. Normally this happens in integrated education but in Northern Ireland, education is so fundamental to what makes Northern Ireland diverse that there is little political enthusiasm for integrated education on either side. The big parties from both sides wanted to keep their children in Protestant or Catholic schools. There is no political support. Only a small sector has integrated education now.

**Participant:** Can you elaborate on the electoral system? How many parties go into the elections, what is the threshold, and is it mandatory for all parties to be in the government?

**Liz O'Donnell:** Today's system is based on shared government. There are not very many parties. The main parties contest the elections. The agreement is that the executive will comprise 50-50 of Nationalists and Unionists. People have to declare what they are, whether it is Nationalists or Unionists. At the moment the DUP is the biggest party, having the first minister. Sinn Féin is the second biggest, with the deputy first minister. There are four Unionists and four Sinn Féin ministers, the SDLP in the other nationalist party. This is not ideal, but it is working all right. They are still political enemies yet they are forced into shared government.

In many ways it makes progress on wider issues, apart from peace, difficult. They are very different when it comes to economic policies yet they share a government. There recently was a budget standoff between the two parties because the UK government brought in a welfare proposal for the whole UK but the Nationalist parties would not accept the welfare cuts and the Unionists were willing to accept them. It led to crisis in



government because of ideological differences. Sinn Féin, the second biggest party, is electorally strong in the Republic camp and they are opposing all austerity. It is complex.

We had very many crises in Northern Ireland; it seems to limp from crisis to crisis. It is getting better though. It still is not a perfect system but at least we have peace. Politics in Northern Ireland will always be difficult. It is a divided society. It is different to the Republic; their politics is much more based on tribal grievance. People still feel Nationalist or Unionist and that is just the way they are and think. There is little room for new ideas or parties. You would imagine opportunities for new parties with the economic recession but there seems no space for fresh thinking. People are still stuck in the trenches.

**Participant:** Was the Women's Coalition elected by London? Were both Protestants and Catholics represented? How was that managed?

**Liz O'Donnell:** They were elected as members of a brand new party called the Northern Irish Women's Coalition. It was not dictated and they came from civil society. It included women from both communities who saw that they would be excluded from important negotiations but who still had a lot to contribute. They were committed to have a say in the new resolution of the war. Yet, if we allowed just traditional parties to have their way they would have been excluded. So they formed a party that entitled them to contest in elections. They drew support from all sectors of society. They did not contribute as Unionists or Nationalists, just as women. They did not play the sectarian card at all. They tried to speak as women and as members of civil society.

**Kerim Yildiz:** When do you think the Northern Irish peace process actually became inclusive?

**Liz O'Donnell:** A big concern of mine was that we made a settlement with only half of the Protestant community. The DUP remained outside and they did not sign. It was a big concern that although a majority of people were voting, there was a big cohort of political Unionist objecting to everything we had agreed. Eventually politics worked that out and they won the elections because of their opposition. It took Sinn Féin so long to give up arms so there was a gradual loss of confidence on the Unionist side and that is why the DUP gained support. People would say that 'this is not a fair deal for Protestants, the IRA still has its arsenal!' They won votes all the time. The DUP came out as the top dogs when the IRA finally gave up arms. That's when it became inclusive. The people opposed to peace had won seats!

I also regret the fact that it was not just the women who did not survive the tumble after negotiations but the same happened to small Loyalist parties, to the paramilitaries on the Protestant side. Without a political party they were not sustainable. They were not expert at being a political party so there are no women and no representatives of Loyalists who were previously paramilitaries. That is why we had unrest in the Loyalist poor working class paramilitaries, who pay allegiance to the Queen. They are poor, uneducated and from the working class who feel excluded. They feel as if they have no political representation at the moment. It was a mistake. We had the choice at the negotiations to continue the weighting and to have loaded voting to ensure that women and Loyalist small groups continued to be involved. The big parties were so selfish and greedy for power that they would not agree.

**Participant:** Rather than being part of one of the sects, how did the women manage to invent a new identity for themselves and what kind of psychology was behind that?

**Liz O'Donnell:** Monica McWilliams was the woman who founded the Coalition. She was a Nationalist. She did not abandon her views or her allegiance and she remained nationalist. They came to the negotiations with an open mind. They could do that because they were mandated to go with an open mind in order to bring common sense and non-sectarianism to the negotiations. They would talk about equality issues and about how to deal with victims of violence. They said they would deal with prisoner issues. They brought a different perspective on education, equality, employment rights and human rights. Monica McWilliams became the first woman in the human rights commission. She held lectures in human rights and equality studies at university. They came from a place that would not have been represented. They did not have to abandon allegiance but they were not there to represent a tribe.

**Kerim Yildiz:** Monica McWilliams is an advisor to DPI. Unfortunately she is not in Belfast when we are.

**Participant:** Since you were minister you participated in the negotiations. I wonder about statistics. How many meetings were carried out? Were they regular meetings? What was the total volume of work?

**Liz O'Donnell:** From the point when negotiations started, I was in Belfast three days a week. It was not always a roundtable. There were far more bilateral talks because the level of trust was not sufficient to have them in one room. The two governments were often acting as proxies. The British government would help the Unionists with the drafting and we helped

the Nationalists to prepare papers. Everything was trafficked through Mitchell's secretariat that was sitting full-time. It allowed the process to go on and have permanency.

We had killings during the negotiations, sectarian ones and some threats to the ceasefire. We had to give security that the process would sustain even with instability outside of the room. It was difficult and a leaky process. People were well behaved in terms of confidentiality. The media wanted to know everything. We became experts at saying little despite being at press conferences. Nothing much was achieved but we pretended so because people were looking for confidence. The media was very supportive. There was little mischief making from the Irish or British media. They knew what was at stake and were supporters but still critical. They reported on atrocities. We kept them up to date on what was happening and they were part of the process. Mitchell was the main chairman of the talks and he would chair the plenary at the big table. Little was achieved at those meetings; most progress was done bilaterally with the parties. Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionists did not sit down once in a discussion, it is hard to believe but we still reached an agreement. The level of trust is still very poor. We negotiated for nine months, reached an agreement, yet the main protagonists never sat down face-to-face.

**Kerim Yildiz:** When did you realise that the peace process would become irreversible?

**Liz O'Donnell:** My own belief was that it could not be relied upon to be permanent as long as guns were not decommissioned. When we had an objectively viable independent body for monitoring we knew that it was irreversible. That is when the arms were taken out of conflict.

*End of session*

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**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

**Session 7: Roundtable Discussion with Dermot Ahern: Setting the Scene for the Good Friday Agreement**

**Venue:** Ballymascanlon Hotel, Dundalk

**With: Dermot Ahern:**<sup>21</sup> Former Irish Member of Parliament



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*21 Dermot Ahern is a member of the DPI Council of Experts as well as a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister. He was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level, including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties.*

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**Esra Elmas:** Welcome to the third meeting of the day. We are in the Dundalk region. Dermot Ahern is our guest; he is the former Minister of Foreign Affairs. He undertook important roles during the agreements before the Good Friday Agreement. Before working as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, he also worked in different ministries. This is a special region as it is between the North and the South. Dermot Ahern is one of the experts of DPI. He has worked together with us in former studies and he has also closely collaborated with Bertie Ahern.

**Dermot Ahern:** Welcome to my home region. I was born in a village on the south side of Dundalk. We are here virtually next door to the border. 20 to 30 years ago you would have been in the middle of a difficult area. Most of you are not politicians and maybe some of you have been. The people I meet usually are politicians. The peace process took over 20 years.



*Participants with guest speaker Dermot Ahern*

By profession I am a lawyer. I came into politics a little by chance. I was fighting with my local community for sports facilities and I was sucked up there. The reason for getting into national politics was because this area suffered economically and physically. Thatcher infamously called this town of Dundalk 'El Paso' as it was regarded as abandoned. 'Abandoned Country' was a book written about it. Some say it was important, more objectively it was written by someone who had an agenda. This area suffered. I got involved as a local businessman. I am aware that we are halfway between Dublin and Belfast, and in every normal society this place would be prospering. When Thatcher heard that a British company would set up a factory here, she stopped it. You could not have a factory in a location sympathetic to the IRA.

I became a national politician in 1987, I was re-elected until 2011 and I was always heavily involved under different Prime Ministers and appointed by different governments. I was mostly aware because I was a person from the border area. For years, the rest of the world regarded

this conflict as a British problem. The Irish were troublesome neighbours of the British in the colonial past but we got no international attraction from Europe or the wider world. It was regarded as a problem on the British doorstep that the British would deal with. Only was it because of our accession to the European Union did we become equal partners to the British on the European table. Subsequently, there was US involvement and then it became an international resolution process rather than a British problem. As a sovereign government we were given credence, unlike previous governments in the 1970s and the 1980s, at the UN. The UK had the influence to counter us at the UN table.

Membership in the EU helped in a lot of ways, particularly as a young MP with the Single European Act.

There was an artificial border created in the 1920's that were substantial British Army checkpoints we had to go through every time I wanted to go to Northern Ireland and it was hard to do business. They built monstrosities like scaffolding towers to look around the area close to here because the British army was afraid of going around on the ground. Instead they brought people in and out by helicopter. They did not police the locality in any way. That is why it was seen as an abandoned country; on the northern side the IRA could do whatever under the cover of darkness. The Irish on this side also had trouble policing because the border was used to evade law and order.

There are two points I want to make. It was really only until the third party intervention that people began to realise that this was bigger than a British problem. I listened to a number of Turkish delegation and I always emphasised that it is important, thanks to organisations like DPI, to look and learn from similar conflicts. As a foreign minister I was often struck



that in different disputes it was the same issues by and large that caused problems despite different cultures. It boiled down to respecting people's differences in culture, respecting equality and respecting everyone. It is one of the reasons why our peace process was only successful when the international community listened to the Nationalist side in the North and by extension the Irish government. Without Tony Blair, and also Clinton, we would not have a peace process or peace.

The proudest moment of my political life was when Clinton in 2006 came to Dundalk. Bill Clinton called us the boomtown because of the peace process, Thatcher called it abandoned. Shortly after the Good Friday Agreement, when peace descended, investment came in and this area became quite prosperous. It recently suffered because of the recession.

### **Esra Elmas opens the floor for questions.**

**Participant:** In the border area, was it mostly Catholic and on the other side is it mostly Catholic or Protestant?

**Dermot Ahern:** Internationally it was perceived as a religious war. It was not. I grew up next door to a Protestant family that was strongly nationalist. It did not necessarily mean that whoever was Protestant was against a united Ireland and vice versa. The vast majority of the Irish Republic at that stage was a mono-cultural, mono-religious society, 90 per cent Catholic. In fact we discriminated positively against other religious minorities in our constitution. Some Catholics complained about the overemphasis on assisting minority religions and cultures.

There was an increase in population with the accession to the European Union, increased migration in the mid-2000s and the economic situation. Over 300,000 came mainly from Poland. I remember when I was foreign minister (I finished in 2008) I was commenting that every nation represented in the UN was represented in Ireland. Of a small population of 4.5 million there was 170 out of 190. It was not a religious dispute but more about national identity and people living in the same space. It is a small island and when you add the South and North it is just over six million. A majority of people in Northern Ireland would be of Unionist persuasion, mainly non-Catholics, because they were planted. They are successors of those planted mainly from Scotland 300-400 years ago. There is an equally small minority, mostly Catholics, in Northern Ireland who would be in favour of a united Ireland, and a majority in the Republic in favour of a united Ireland. It is not black or white.

**Participant:** When you reached an understanding with the Good Friday Agreement Thatcher was already outside politics. After drafting the agreement we know that Blair visited Thatcher in her house and gave the information to her as a former Prime Minister outside of politics. Thatcher then made a press statement in favour of the Good Friday Agreement, is that correct?

**Dermot Ahern:** She would have been in favour I think. I do not think she could have done otherwise. She was out of politics and people did not really listen to what she had to say. There was so much overwhelming support for the Good Friday Agreement and we had referendums; no responsible person would be against it. She was conservative. They are still called the Conservative and Unionist Party. The Unionist bit is in favour of keeping the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in official terms. The Good Friday Agreement was the first referendum where they

voted in favour of the conditions. We amended the constitution that laid claim to the whole island. We had a civil war in the 1920s because of this partition. Subsequently parties formed out of that issue, and my party [Fianna Fáil] was the main party against partition. The other one is in government now (the DUP). They would have been pro partition. This is a difference to this day but not relevant anymore.

**Participant:** The reason for my question is that Tony Blair was the main architect and at the time even the people with the most extremist thoughts were convinced. They even tried to convince people outside of Ireland, in the UK, to involve them. In Turkey, we have some parties pro agreement but also some who are strongly against it. That's why those in favour of an agreement must work together with the ones against it.

**Dermot Ahern:** From Blair's point of view, there was no point in convincing the people of the UK. They did not care about Northern Ireland. It was about the people in Northern Ireland and getting the extremists to put down their guns and stop shooting at innocent and non-innocent people. To a certain extent things got so bad that even the extremists were convinced. In a perverse way things had to get bad before getting better.

Prince Charles and his wife are coming to Ireland in May and one of the places they will visit will be where Lord Mountbatten was blown up fishing on a lake. The IRA also killed 18 British soldiers that day, about ten miles from here 30 years ago. The surviving soldiers were shot and civilians were killed at this Loch. Things got so bad most of us who lived through it still remember. It was a bit like when people recall where they were when 9/11 happened. We can remember what we have been doing during these occasions. Despite atrocities that happened and despite

governments moving apart and not talking to people, we redoubled our efforts. We did that in secret to some degree, away from the public to try and retain some light at the tunnel. It is always important to investigate and make sure that murderers lay down their guns.

**Participant:** Is there a possibility for a united Ireland?

**Dermot Ahern:** Not in my lifetime, although I would like to see it. John Hume, a key architect in our peace and leader of the SDLP, famously said that it is not so much about uniting the territory but about the people living on it. I have always been of that view. I vehemently disagree with the IRA and with Sinn Féin even though they have the same ideal. I disagree with the methods with which they try to achieve it. It is counterproductive to try and bomb and shoot people into a united Ireland against their will. I always believed a better way of achieving unity was by negotiation and by reconciliation. The campaign of the IRA was counterproductive and put the negotiations back further. Again, with a small population on the island, and only 1.5 million in the North, there was no family who hadn't been touched by the violence. Human beings will recall what happened to their loved ones. I can understand people in the Unionist communities unwilling to sit down with Nationalists. I can understand why the IRA started in first place. There was distinct discrimination aided by the British in Northern Ireland for decades prior to 1969.

**Participant:** With hindsight, was the political solution able to eliminate the entire problem – cultural, social and class differences? To what extent were they satisfied with a political solution?

**Dermot Ahern:** Ultimately if civil society is not brought in on the process, you will not heal wounds that are there. It will take long time for a united Ireland and maybe not in the form that we would like to see it. While we have peace on the island, it is an uneasy peace. There are deep wounds. If you scratch the surface, it will erupt. For instance two years ago one of the issues left behind by the Good Friday Agreement and by the St Andrews Agreement was of flags and emblems. You have a government of sorts in Northern Ireland, a partnership not democratic government like in Ireland, where whoever wins the election has the complete say. They were not given all the powers in the North, which is why there is still a long way to go in the political and cultural sphere. The US did pump a lot of money into the north of Ireland, as did the EU, into community projects to try to bring people together. Recipients of funds like the International Fund for Ireland, mainly financed by the US, would be children and students who were brought together. Huge work still has to be done. It is an uneasy peace as I said, but still it is peace and we are thankful for that.

**Participant:** There was involvement of the EU and the US in Ireland. In this process did you discuss the sovereignty problem of Ireland? You were Minister of Foreign Affairs. Were there discussions about the perception that such kind of international intervention means to the sovereignty of a country? Turkey is negotiating about EU accession but there is the ongoing Kurdish problem. How can the EU help Turkey more effectively?

**Dermot Ahern:** I mentioned border checkpoints and military infrastructure. We also had physical borders that literally disappeared over night after the Single European Act with the free movement of goods and services. This had a huge effect in border area. A lot of customs checkpoints disappeared. Everything was done virtually after that. The

EU had a big impact. I am aware of Turkey's accession, I was minister when the talks started with Gül as foreign minister at the time. The EU has influence in all sorts of ways. It allowed us to be an equal member at the European table instead of being an irritant.

We did not have a sovereignty problem as we put a referendum there to change our constitution in order to ratify the Good Friday Agreement. For the first time, we deleted the claim on the right over Northern Ireland. Instead, we put a clause in from Good Friday Agreement: a united Ireland only happens if 50 per cent or more of the people in Northern Ireland decide that they want unification. I am proud of one of my first speeches in parliament that was about a perception in the 1970s and 80s that eventually Nationalists would outbreed Protestants. The figure showed that Catholic parents had more children than Protestants.

It was simplistic, Catholics and Nationalists are not always the same, but the idea that they would outbreed and then decide on a united Ireland when they gained a slight majority of 50 per cent or more... I always said about this idea of '50 per cent plus 1' that I would not want to be around if the existing majority of Unionists were forced into a united Ireland because of '50 per cent plus 1'. We need to come to an accommodation with people with different ideas of Ireland. It is about uniting the people, about agreeing to par differences like with the Good Friday Agreement and have a pared constitution with political issues. For instance when I was Minister of Communication and Energy I said it did not make sense that on a small island there are two electricity grids. They should be connected so when there is a problem on one side the other side can help. In fairness to the politicians in the North, they agreed with that. Equally, when you came to this hotel or my own house or when you called from a mobile phone in the sitting room of my house I would be welcome

to speak with the UK. I became Minister for Telecommunication and forced them to make sure that if that were to happen I would not have excessive roaming charges. I led charge on the EU level of doing away with roaming across Europe. How to replicate that in Turkey? I do not claim any expertise. I do think that perhaps some outside influence would be of great help. The EU has so much on the play that they may want somebody else to settle it. The EU would say to a country like Turkey that it would be encouraging internal efforts to bring peace in Turkey. Only then would a majority favour Turkey to join the EU.

**Participant:** What kinds of relations were there between the Republican government in Ireland and the IRA?

**Dermot Ahern:** Torturous ones. In 1988 I was asked by the then Prime Minister of the Republic to meet them in secret. I did that in Dundalk. With Gerry Adams, Mitchell McLaughlin, Pat Sheehan; now leading Sinn Féin members. There were efforts mainly by religious people to see if there was any possibility that the IRA would stop their campaign of violence. Over time, although it was torturous, it has worked out. It was one of the things my party did. The more we were successful at convincing Sinn Féin to put down the gun and go into politics the more they would ease into our space. The recession also did not help but it happened. Sinn Féin is now a reasonably legitimate political party. One of their leaders said we fight with the Armalite in one and the ballot box in the other hand. Unfortunately, they continued for a long time.

The biggest bank raid in history of the British Isles took place towards the end of the peace talks; 26 million pounds was stolen in Belfast. Without a shadow of doubt, I was then Minister of Foreign Affairs and subsequently of justice, Sinn Féin/IRA carried it out. One reason was that it was a

way of paying off a lot of combatants. It was sanctioned by leaders of Sinn Féin/IRA as a way of allowing their members to come away from violence and go into 'legitimate' business. There is nasty laundry, almost every week on this side of the border. Toxic sludge from fuel laundering is dumped from across border. The local authority spent millions trying to deal with this. Without a shadow of doubt, the people who are diesel laundering were formally shooting and killing people.

**Participant:** How was Sinn Féin performing politically in the South after the Good Friday Agreement? Did they increase their votes?

**Dermot Ahern:** Yes, there has been an incremental increase in votes. It is accepted now that they are representatives in parliament and local authorities. They are not involved in violence anymore, which is a good thing. For people from our generation, we still remember the murder mayhem they caused and we cannot forgive them. Gerry Adams succeeded me here in my constituency. I have no idea why my people would vote for him, having been a leader of an organisation that carried out atrocities. A farmer who I knew was taken and murdered by the IRA because he found guns and explosives on his land and told the police about it. Most people know who did it but there is no proof. In the Omagh bombing, which left 26 dead, most of who did it came from this country. They were Northerners who settled in this area, hence 'El Paso' by Thatcher.

**Kerim Yildiz:** You had a lot of money for conflict resolution. This money is spent around ending violence. Why did the government initially decide against international assistance but later accepted it from the UK? In the case of Turkey, the government is quite opposed to a third party or assistance, at least publically. We have learned from the media that apparently there were secret talks between the government and armed



groups. On the one hand there are secret talks through a third party but then officially there is no third party.

**Dermot Ahern:** John Major said in parliament the he would get sick of the thought of any suggestion that his government would be in talks with the IRA. It is now proved that they were and he knew about it. I do not want to say that we are better than Turkey but we do have a free press. From what I read, which is all I know, I do not know if you have it or not. To focus on outside influence and international eyes could not be as pivotal if it had not been for the focus of the media. We have an active media here in Ireland despite many talks held in secret. My 1988 talks did not get out until 1998. My career as a young MP could have been ruined if people knew I was engaged in talks. It is sometimes necessary to do things under the table and in the cover of darkness.

In terms of the influence of the international community, the international and national press was a huge influence here. Perhaps that is not possible in Turkey. You can cure that. If you were Prime Minister in 1988, with a minority government, you would not have lasted for five seconds to openly negotiate because of the perception that he was a Nationalist leader and he would have had to pull out. He took that risk to delegate me and two others to meet with the IRA. In fairness to the media they were very conscious of their reporting. In the history of our parliament, whoever was in the opposition would not take political advantage of the government in any blow-up in the problem of the peace process. The role of the civil society is critical in any process.

*End of session*



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015**

**Session 8: Roundtable Discussion with the Northern Ireland Office: The Role of the British Government in the Good Friday Agreement**

Venue: Stormont House, Belfast

With:

**Michael McAvoy**, Deputy Director of the Engagement Group,  
Northern Ireland Office





**Michael McAvoy:** Welcome to Stormont House, the British government's representation. I am the Deputy Director of the Engagement Group of the Northern Ireland office. I will give a presentation and give a British commentary on the peace process. The Engagement Group deals with our outreach. Joe, my colleague, also deals with commemorations. We are in a decade of centenaries; of the First World War and for Ireland a number of events have occurred from 1912-1922. This in many represents key changes on this island. They play right through the Troubles we had here and the peace process.

Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. It lies in a small corner of the island of Ireland, and it was created in 1921 with partition. 1.8 million people live here, which is two per cent of the British population. Six counties form Northern Ireland, six out of 32 on island. The Troubles are firstly explained as a religious dispute between Catholics and

Protestants. It was much more nuanced; it was about identity, affiliation, allegiance, and history. There is a slight majority of Protestants in the North. Typically, Protestants are characterised as Unionist, they want to remain British, and Catholics as nationalists or Republicans. This is simplistic though.

History is something we are very fond of. We can start in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the first formal link between the UK and Ireland. There was Protestant majority rule. The creation of Northern Ireland and Ireland was a political deal, and a number of Catholics in the North perhaps did not feel entirely reconciled with the political entity they lived in. There was a civil rights movement in the 1960s that sought equal citizenship and the removal of discrimination and inequality. It created a platform for discontent to manifest itself in violent extremism. It tried to force the British to leave Northern Ireland, as they were an external entity. To call the UK external was a bit odd for those who felt Unionist and British, of which lots of them have been here since the mid of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Scots and English. Throughout the 1960s, at the start of the Troubles, there was a campaign of civil unrest against the British state. In 1972, the British government stepped in and superseded Northern Ireland's government by direct rule from London. A British minister came to administer Northern Ireland. This continued from 1972.

## Historical Background

- ◆ 1801 Act of Union. Irish Parliament suppressed and Irish MPs sit in Westminster in the United Kingdom.
- ◆ 1921 - 1968 Partition of Ireland. Unionist Majority rule in Northern Ireland.
- ◆ 1968 Growing Catholic protest against discrimination leads to Civil Rights movement.
- ◆ 1968 Unionist fear of Civil Rights as a route to a United Ireland
- ◆ 1968 Outbreak of 'the Troubles'
- ◆ 1969 Introduction of British Army
- ◆ 1972 UK Government suspends the Devolved Administration - Direct Rule begins



*Speaker Michael McAvoy, Northern Ireland Office*

Some statistics: 3600 people have been killed since 1969, 57 per cent of them were by Republicans and 28 per cent were by Loyalists as a response to Republican violence against their communities. The conflict became sectarian. It is often called the 'dirty war'. It creates serious schisms, fear and resentment. Sometimes it is hard to date the start of the peace process. From 1972 through I can point at political initiatives to stop the violence but I opted for the 1993 Downing Street Declaration here. The Irish and British Prime Ministers then, Reynolds and Major, made a political agreement. They established a number of principles about the Irish dimension and the importance of consent from the people of Northern Ireland. Traditional Irish republicanism always thought that a majority of the people of the whole island matters and not just in Northern Ireland because they did not accept this entity. The Irish and British government acknowledged that a majority in the North was required. There should further be a peaceful constitutional settlement to find a solution for future generations. The label 'Loyalist' or 'Republican' sometimes makes it seem like that is the only issue but people's lives are about more issues such as education but parties enter the stage with the status question.

Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, was largely accepted during the 1980s. There was a hunger strike to protest against the prison regime with ten dead in a Northern Irish prison. They wanted recognition as political prisoners, despite having committed violence. The movement Sinn Féin started in the 1980's as a small party during the time of the IRA campaign had limited support at the polls but it has grown and changed since. At the time it was the political representation of an armed group, which people struggled with.

The IRA ceasefire in 1994 was a critical turning point and an event that made all the difference. That's when people agreed to talk to Sinn Féin.

The ceasefire broke down with the 1996 Canary Wharf bombing and was later re-established. It created the circumstances for dialogue. It was one key milestone and people quickly started to ask whether it meant a complete cessation of violence or if it was a strategic decision. There were lots of discussions about decommissioning.

## Remaining Challenges – Divided Society



- ◆ Ongoing community segregation – 92% of public housing and 93% of education is divided.
- ◆ Orange Order Parades and interface violence.
- ◆ Loyalist flag protests starting in 2012 symptomatic of wider disaffection
- ◆ Ongoing threat from 'dissident republicans' – 22 national security attacks in 2014, police, armed forces and prison officers remain targets

The key personalities involved included John Major<sup>22</sup> and so on, but also Tony Blair, Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness,<sup>23</sup> Bertie Ahern, who came forward for their constituencies and John Hume from the SDLP who became the Nobel Peace Prize winner with David Trimble.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *John Major was British Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party.*

<sup>23</sup> *Martin McGuinness is an Irish Republic Sinn Féin politician and a former leader of the PIRA.*

<sup>24</sup> *David Trimble was first minister to Northern Ireland 1998-2002 and the Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party.*

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Sinn Féin joined talks in 1997 and some parties boycotted it, which was a recurring theme. A key part was establishing the Mitchell principles, the terms to participate. It required rejecting political violence. Mitchell chaired the talks as an independent, honest broker with key skills. At the time, the Northern Ireland problem seemed one of the most intractable disputes. Some said it was a civil war.

**Kerim Yildiz:** How was Mitchell chosen?

**Michael McAvoy:** The Americans had a political interest in Northern Ireland and they also had a special relationship with the UK. 50 million Americans claim Irish heritage. Clinton was interested in trying to move the peace process in Northern Ireland forward as it was the obvious way to go.

A key moment was the Good Friday Agreement at the end of yearlong talks. From 1993 Sinn Féin and John Hume talked but there were many setbacks along the way. The Good Friday Agreement went to all households in Northern Ireland. It discussed relations with Ireland and Northern Ireland and the East-West relationship. Two things were critical for the Good Friday Agreement: firstly a constitutional claim by Ireland to the whole territory and also the consent principle, a majority needs to vote for change. This created space for normal politics and government businesses to occur free from violence. Being British or Irish was not free from the debate but it was put into the political space. There was a way to do that through political means.

**Participant:** Would the UK accept a referendum?

**Michael McAvoy:** The government would accept it because that is what the agreement says. Absolutely, we have a recent example - the Scottish voted in a referendum.

The Good Friday Agreement set up good governance, human rights, equality and reform of the police and justice system. Lots of people were in jail, thousands, for their part in terrorist acts. They were part of the process and keen to participate in the discussions. So part of the deal, endorsed by a majority in Northern Ireland, was that people in jail would be released after a maximum of two years. After 3600 were killed and over 10,000 injured because of these prisoners, it was difficult to sell that in Northern Ireland. It was endorsed through the referendum. Some say it was part of the price to pay for peace.

An international body was set up to monitor decommissioning, to find ways to gather up all weapons and explosives and have them verifiably put out of use. That became a political issue and it was destabilising. There were often problems about the timing and whether the IRA would ever decommission. Others did not find IRA weapons acceptable even if they were buried somewhere. It was done in 2007. Policing was another issue that remained with the British government; it seemed too much for the devolved government who only gained back control in 2010. It was a rolling devolution; road transport and such was devolved in 1998. Police and the justice systems came a while after.

There were milestones along the road. The peace process in Northern Ireland was a long process. Later, issues such as flags, symbols and policing took a long time. There never was a one-off agreement; it was always work in progress. Three months before Christmas we spoke on a range of issues. In this room, we had the Irish Prime Minister and

David Cameron hosting talks with political parties to get a deal. In 2005 decommissioning happened and it took some more years until all armed groups put their guns beyond use.

The largest parties at the Good Friday Agreement were the Unionist UUP and the SDLP. Over the time, since the Agreement was made up in 2007, there was a change in the support base. Sinn Féin became the largest Nationalist party and the DUP the largest party in Northern Ireland. They found a way to use other agreements, namely the St Andrews Agreement, as a political manoeuvre to meet their requirements.

I mentioned the Stormont House Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement was no once-and-for-all deal. The Stormont House Agreement was around finances, welfare reform, flags and parades. It was about the legacy of the past and many victims found it politically unacceptable to talk to representatives of the IRA who used arms against civilians. Many families did not see anyone convicted for the death of their loved ones. We wanted to put in place new ways of dealing with the past where people would go to an interlocutor to get information about the circumstances of a death.

There were international bodies for decommissioning and another one about victims' remains – the IRA buried many and their bodies never found. There was an international monitoring commission again to provide commentary on the quality of the ceasefire. Trust was still in short supply at the Good Friday Agreement. We have a general election coming up in the UK for the Westminster parliament in May. Next year there will be Assembly elections. It is always work in progress and issues are always coming up. The parties in Northern Ireland can deal with a lot of it and sometimes the British and Irish governments get involved. Their

foreign ministers co-chaired talks to discuss those issues.

We have a stable political system. The economy of Northern Ireland was badly affected and now it is a common interest of the UK and Ireland that the economy in Northern Ireland prospers. Reconciliation is a key strand because, due to the separation and segregation there are lots of institutional impediments to Protestants and Catholics working and educating together. These structures prevent peace and normalisation. If you drive around parts of Belfast you will see walls separating communities, 'peace walls'. This is not normal! The new generation should see change but this will take time. It is a negative note to finish on but also a positive one. We now have space to deal with those circumstances.

**Participant:** How does the UK feel – do they feel defeated?

**Michael McAvoy:** I grew up in Northern Ireland and I have an Irish and Northern Irish passport. The British government established the position a number of years ago saying that they do not have selfish or strategic interest in Northern Ireland. As democrats, they are happy if a majority decides to leave the UK. It is a benign relationship as the Conservatives have the policy of supporting unity. They want to keep the joint union but as democrats they respect the wishes of the people in Northern Ireland. Ireland also gave up their territorial claim as part of the agreement and it was a price worth paying. It was backed by a referendum with 72 per cent approval.

**Participant:** What is the role of Northern Ireland in the British economy?

**Michael McAvoy:** It makes up about two per cent of the British economy. It suffered during the Troubles. It was hard to encourage people to visit

or to attract investment. Northern Ireland has the highest level of foreign direct investment. It is work in progress. Unemployment is at six per cent, below the British average. During the Troubles, it consistently had the highest in the UK, in some areas more than 20 per cent.

**Participant:** The Protestants in Northern Ireland are mostly coming from Scotland. Whenever there is tension between Scotland and the UK, what would their attitude be?

**Michael McAvoy:** The honest answer is that when you are a Unionist, Protestant in Northern Ireland it stands to reason that you want to be united with the entirety of the UK. Most of the parties in Northern Ireland did not express views on the Scottish referendum though some did. The issue of Scotland is that there are lots of ties and cultural, linguistic links. The referendum was seen as a Scottish matter and they preferred to be part of the union.

**Participant:** What's the percentage of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland?

**Michael McAvoy:** 48 per cent are Protestant, 45 per cent are Catholic.

**Participant 5:** International people mostly know the situation as a sectarian conflict. However, you said that there are other problems beyond sectarianism. What are they?

**Michael McAvoy:** It is not religious between Catholics and Protestants. It would mean that all Catholics are Republicans, which is too simplistic. Lots of people have different reasons ranging from economic and cultural.

Some are happy with the link to Britain and see their relationship as normal. All are members of the EU.

**Esra Elmas:** What was the contribution of the Stormont Hose Agreement to the resolution process?

**Michael McAvoy:** It dealt with some controversial issues like flags, public unrest around parades and with the finances of the government. The attempt to deal with the legacy of the past was key. Academics are appointed to prepare an oral history archive of the Troubles, as a body by the British and Irish government for people with lost family members to go. A new historical investigation unit was set up to reinvestigate Trouble-related deaths. 1,500 of the 3,600 had previously been reviewed but a lot of work still needs to be done. It resulted in four prosecutions, some dating back to the 1970s and 80s. They only serve a maximum of two years. This generates tensions and some have the viewpoints that we should draw a line to have no more inquiries or prosecutions. Politically, most parties believe that people should have access to justice if there is enough evidence. It means we go constantly back to events during the Troubles and this can be destabilising.

**Esra Elmas:** Is there a debate about issues like the peace walls and those paintings? It is ironic for a third person to see those peace walls.

**Michael McAvoy:** There is a debate. It is often about territory, the areas are usually Protestant or Catholic. At the start of the Troubles there was movement of people in which Catholics left Protestant areas. They resettled along sectarian lines. Peace walls prevent attacks of one to the other community. We have other institutionalised separation. For example, most children go to predominantly Catholic or Protestant schools. Most Protestants go to state schools, now there is a movement

driven by locals and parents to have them educated together. Less than ten per cent go to integrated schools with roughly equal numbers. This is not normal. It is hard to force integration in some areas and it is not universally supported. The UK commits 50 million pounds over ten years investing in schooling.

**Participant:** You have established a new police service. How is it operated? What relationship does it have with the British police, their intelligence, and the British army? Is it different to the old relationship before the Good Friday Agreement?

**Michael McAvoy:** The army was brought in to help the police service with civil unrest. It left and ended that operation. There are still barracks in Northern Ireland and in other places of the UK, with a very small number of people. They do not perform any role to support the police. There is a new police now, the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The old RUC had a Protestant workforce for different reasons. The IRA attacked often police officers, so Catholics joining the police would be more vulnerable to Catholic attacks. It moved to a more representative police through positive discrimination, from eight to 30 per cent Catholics.

The UK still plays a role for intelligence with the MI5 still operating. Although some things were devolved to the Northern Ireland executive, national security is still on a national level. Cooperation with the Irish police and agencies in Northern Ireland is exceptionally good and sharing of information takes place. Not everyone was reconciled of ending the armed struggle and still in 2015 there are groupings actively pursuing an armed campaign. They killed two policemen, one prison officer and two soldiers at an army barracks. The bomb in Omagh after the Good Friday Agreement was one of the biggest atrocities. It was committed by a group that was not happy with the IRA going to ceasefire. The police now deal

with that and it is working with the UK and Ireland, which is a success. There is no popular public support for those groupings.

**Participant:** How does power-sharing work?

**Michael McAvoy:** It is a forced coalition government. It relies on creating an executive body to run affairs, representing both groups. There are 180 members in the Assembly and five parties in the coalition government. Most parties sitting in the Assembly have representation in the government. Parties in the executive are represented according to the D'Hont system in order to prevent majority rule.

**Participant:** There was a ceasefire in 1996 followed by the Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998. There has been 20 years without conflict now. Has a process been created for the transition from sectarian to political identity? Are there Protestants who vote for Sinn Féin or the other way around?

**Michael McAvoy:** Traditionally, there have been Catholics who signalled the intention to remain in the UK. The test of the settlement would be when people vote for parties on their policies. Protestants still largely vote for Unionists but they also vote for parties such as the Alliance, which is shared by Catholics and Protestants and focuses on policies. Parties still identify themselves as pro Union or Republic. This has not moved that much. The younger generation growing up in the last 20 years knows nothing of the Troubles. In a recent census about their identity, 20 per cent said they were Northern Irish. The younger are happy with being Northern Irish.

*End of session*



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015**

**Session 9: Roundtable Discussion with Sinn Féin Members of Parliament: The Role of international Actors in Moving from Armed Struggle to a Political Solution**

Venue: Stormont Assembly

With:

**Pat Sheehan MLA**, member of the Northern Ireland Assembly  
for Sinn Féin

**Rosie McCorley MLA**, member of the Northern Ireland Assembly  
for Sinn Féin





**Pat Sheehan:** I would like to set the conflict in Northern Ireland in context by explaining how the peace process developed and where we are today. Both Rosie and I are former prisoners. I spent 18 years in prison and Rosie 10 years, both for IRA activities.

The conflict is easily understood through the prism of colonialism. England invaded Ireland 800 years ago and there has been constant resistance to that occupation. It manifested itself on a number of occasions in armed uprisings, the most significant one at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Easter uprising in 1916 was a failure in military terms. The British took out all leaders and executed them, which created support for the war of independence. This is wrongly named because Ireland only gained limited independence and instead there was partition. Ireland was partitioned on the basis of gerrymandered sectarian headcount. Those loyal to the British resided mainly in the northeast where we are today. These Unionists were offered nine counties and they refused because their majority would have been too narrow. They accepted six thinking that their majority would last forever. The first Prime Minister described

the new institutions, this new quasi-state as Protestant parliament for Protestant people.

It was not about religion but rather about national identity. So if you were not Unionist or Protestant, you were a second-class citizen. Catholics were discriminated against in every walk of life: in employment, housing, education, culturally, politically and economically. It was institutionalised sectarianism, a denial of civil rights. Protests in the 1960s were met with violence from the state. There were abuses of human rights as well. We had a colonial situation; there was the injustice of partition on top of discrimination, sectarianism, the abuse of human rights and the denial of civil rights. An explosion was inevitable and it did explode in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was another armed uprising, which lasted for 30 years. Irish republicans, like myself, Rosie and Sinn Féin, believed in an independent united Irish republic without interference from Britain. We did not believe that we had a peaceful avenue for our objectives. That was the reason for armed resistance.

Our leadership acknowledged in the 1970s the lack of peaceful channels and even the British military generals wrote that there was military stalemate. We acknowledged that we could not defeat the British. Why did the conflict continue? The political leadership continued to believe that a combination of military aggression and attempts to politically isolate republicans would lead to their defeat. They launched political initiatives that excluded Irish republicans. This was doomed to fail. If the process were not all-inclusive it would not succeed. It was only in the early 1990s that we entered the peace process. We had to resolve a number of issues ourselves. We had to internationalise the conflict because the British government consistently said that the conflict was their internal problem. They claimed it was an issue of criminality, of illegality, a law

and order issue. There are 40 million people in the US claiming Irish descent and this lobby is the second strongest after the Jewish lobby. This secured commitment from Clinton when he was campaigning for presidency. When he got elected he put Northern Ireland on top of his agenda. American involvement was probably crucial. We are critical of US foreign policy in the rest of the world, particularly in the Middle East, but their instinct here was good.

We also had to create unity among other political parties of similar persuasion, others who did not support armed struggle, such as the SDLP. We also had to bring in the Dublin government into that coalition. Our organisation has a history of splits and divisions, of former comrades killing each other. It became a strategic imperative within our organisation that there had to be unity. Otherwise there could be no peace process. Our leadership made it their business to inform the rank-and-file and separate parts of the organisation about what was happening at every step. No one was ever surprised when major decisions were made. This does not mean that rank-and-file could force decisions onto the leadership, because it was a leadership-driven initiative. But the rank-and-file needed to be informed and have trust in the leadership. On occasions, the leadership presented rank-and-file with *fait accompli* without a major discussion around it. However, because of the trust built between the base and the leadership the movement was not necessarily happy but they certainly had trust. When many had not agreed, they were still happy with the overall strategy.

This brought us to the IRA ceasefire of 1994. The British government and the Unionists began putting obstacles in the way of the process. They demanded that the IRA used particular words to say that the ceasefire was permanent and they demanded that we surrender weapons, and so

on. It broke down and was only re-established when a new government came to power led by Blair. The process was then revived, which led to the Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement was a game-changer. It was ultimately a conflict about national identity. What the Good Friday Agreement did was create a frame in which that could happen in a peaceful and democratic way. There was the possibility of a referendum at some stage in the future. If 50 per cent plus 1 voted for a united Ireland, it would happen. Another cornerstone was the concept of equality, the equal recognition of other aspirations of our identities and cultures. There was also an 'all Ireland architecture' within it, for greater cooperation between the North and South.

At the Good Friday Agreement, the main parties were the SDLP and UUP. Now it is the DUP and Sinn Féin. We came to a brink at many times during the process but we were able to resolve problematic issues. Since the Good Friday Agreement, a number of further agreements have been made. They were named after the places where the agreement was held, for example the St Andrews and the Stormont House Agreement. It is easy to get an agreement but difficult to implement. There is the example of David Trimble, the leader of the UUP. His party had suffered losses since initially signing up to the agreement and instead of coming out and sealing it, they retreated from aspects of the agreement. Their own people became confused whether it was a good or bad agreement. The DUP who had not signed up then overtook them politically.

Looking towards the institutions, we now have a power-sharing government. Five parties get seats dependent on the number of seats they win in elections. You will find a different language being used in this set-up. We call it a partnership government, the Unionist refer to it as a mandatory coalition. Sometimes they argue that it is a bad system,

difficult to work and frustrating, and they talk about the Westminster model with a government and an opposition. But that's of course if you compare it the other model, you must compare it with what was before. We had 30 years of conflict and 50 years before it was a one-party state when the minority was discriminated against. The process is not the final deal. The Good Friday Agreement was never the final solution to the issues that created the conflict. It removed the arms and violence from the equation.



*Speakers Pat Sheehan and Rosie McCorley, Sinn Féin members of the Northern Ireland Assembly*

**Participant 3:** How did the strongest parties change?

**Pat Sheehan:** If the UUP had gone out strongly and sold it, if it had informed their people about its details, they would be in a much stronger position today. They instead allowed their flank to be exposed by

accepting that there are weaknesses. It is always a compromise; you have to prepare your people for that. It is a must.

**Rosie McCorley:** The DUP was able to accept it once they were the biggest party, now they were the leaders of Unionism. In some sense it is about being the top dog. Prior, the DUP had always been the biggest critic but they changed positions over night after becoming number one. Paisley came across as anti-Catholic and overnight he was happy to share power with Martin McGuinness who earlier he would have called the devil. Some within DUP cannot accept compromise. The DUP said they will never go into government with terrorists and they changed their position on that.

**Participant:** In 2017 there will be the referendum about being a member of the EU or not. One of Sinn Féin's political aims was the unity of Ireland. Are you definitely pursuing that with non-violent means? If the UK's EU membership ends, what is the projection of the unity of Ireland for the future?

**Pat Sheehan:** This referendum is not definite. We have a lot of agriculture here. If the UK leaves the European Union there will be a lot of consequences for the agriculture and industry in the North. There would be an imbalance in agriculture between the South and the North, which would weaken Northern Ireland and would help our argument for a united Ireland. We want to reach our objectives. We are the only party organised all over Ireland, in both Irelands. At the last European elections, which were simultaneous in the North and South, Sinn Féin was the biggest party on the island and we continue to build our political strength.

We want to convince the Unionists to be in a united independent Ireland. As part of the population of the UK, the Unionists make up a small minority, less than 1 million within 60 million. The North here is at the periphery in every way: politically, economically, and culturally. The Unionists have little influence over the British government. In Ireland they would make a sizeable minority. We have to continue convincing the Unionists of that benefit. If the UK withdraws from the EU it would help us. It is ironic that we favour negotiating terms with the EU about not ceding too much sovereignty to Brussels but it would be more beneficial for Ireland to remain in the EU.

**Participant:** You have served 10 years in prison - were you released after the Good Friday Agreement? Did you have the psychology and the understanding that everything was then finished? When you first entered parliament you faced the Unionists. They see you as murderers. Did you feel that they were invaders? How is the cooperative environment between you and the Unionists?

**Rosie McCorley:** We were both released under the Good Friday Agreement. It was Pat's second term. We understood that the conflict was political but we were involved in the military aspect because we saw no alternative. The process of realisation that the armed conflict was truly over took longer for some than others. By and large, the vast majority of Republicans think that this peaceful political way forward is the best to achieve our objectives. A small number of groups have gone different ways. They can be dealt with as a law and order issue.

I came to the Assembly three years ago; I worked with Unionists on committees and outside committees as well. Some of them are friendly, some are happy to have a working arrangement and some are opposed



to working and engaging with us in meaningful ways. There is a smallish number of Unionists in the DUP who still resist having full engagement with us. Whenever issues around conflict and the legacy arise, such as the police or the victims, there are divisions among us on those issues. There are efforts, with the Stormont House Agreement as the most recent, to have outstanding issues brought into the process. That's still an on going process and will continue to be. Those interests must be resolved to bring lasting stability.

**Pat Sheehan:** Legacy is constantly a dark cloud over the political process here, as we cannot agree on what the conflict was. The Republicans say it was an anti-colonial struggle against oppression in our own country and the Unionists say it was a terrorist campaign. There are two narratives, but the Unionists will not agree to that. There are constant clashes. It can be depressing to work at times because the issues related to the conflict still impinge on the current process. We were involved in armed conflict and so were many Unionists, in the police or the British army. Very few were not involved on one side or the other.

Some of the difficult points are not dealt with in the Good Friday Agreement. One would be the IRA's weapons, another was policing and the international commission that it said would be established. The Unionists and the UK had demands that the IRA surrenders its weapons; we had the view that we were not defeated on the battlefield so why would we surrender. So there was a commission under de Chastelain, helped by Ahtisaari and Ramaphosa and local clergyman. The formula was that the IRA put their weapons beyond use, which would be verified by an international commission. A similar arrangement dealt with policing, which was seen as the armed wing of Unionism. There should be a police service representing the whole community, a new police

service with oversight and accountability. I sat on the policing board with ten independents and ten political members. I was formally part of an organisation to kill the police and now I decide on hiring and firing of policemen. They have operational independence so we do not force them to carry out particular operations but once they do they are answerable to the policing board.

**Participant:** There are members of the working class on both sides. How did they act in line with class interest or identity?

**Pat Sheehan:** It was by and large the working class that was affected by the conflict. The conflict was worst in the working class areas. We are a left wing party, so the working class mainly supported us. The Republican working class probably identifies with us. The Unionists are different, the DUP and all Unionist parties would be right wing to various degrees but the working class of the Unionists would still vote for them. Divide and conquer comes in here. Whenever there are tensions in the Unionist camp they would say that the Republicans want to take your job and houses. Prior to the 1960s, the main industries in the North were heavy industry, engineering, rope making and ship making. The shipyard once employed over 30,000 workers but only a tiny percentage from our community worked in big engineering plants. There is a legacy issue related to that. Among Unionist working class boys there is a high degree of education underachievement. They previously had not had a culture for education. Jobs were available for them in the industry but this has all changed. We have a modern economy now and you need qualifications for jobs. The Catholic population had always pushed their children towards education; it has been the escape route from poverty and discrimination.

**Participant:** There are freedom fighters around the world and many of them suffer in prisons. Can you talk about your experience in prison?

**Pat Sheehan:** I was in prison on two occasions, each over nine years. I spent three years on the H-blocks, famous for the blanket protests and I was also part of the hunger strike in 1991 when ten others died. When the hunger strike ended, I was 55 days on it and critically ill. I am lucky to be here today. Prison was a very brutal place. The prison administration had a carte blanche to break protests and they did whatever they could to do that. Prisons played a big part in the struggle. One of the most significant events apart from the hunger strike was Bobby Sands' election as member of the British parliament when he was on hunger strike. Prior to that Republicans did not take part in elections. One reason was because it would not achieve anything, the other was that we felt to enter into politics would mean compromising our principles. In 1981, in the constituency of Bobby Sands, there was a massive debate in our organisation to put Bobby Sands forward. If he lost it would have been a major setback for the protest. He was elected however, which was a major blow against Thatcher's argument that prisoners were criminals. The election was the single biggest news issue on that planet that day. It had a number of impacts. In our own organisation, it convinced many sceptics that electoral politics could be an arena for struggle and it also convinced others in the UK that they were not close to defeating us. After that election we contested in elections and went from strength to strength, which opened up a new sphere of our struggle and it opened eyes in the British establishment. They had argued that we had no support and now our support could be measured electorally. What was the happiest day of my life? The day Bobby Sands got elected was massive.

**Rosie McCorley:** What are your issues, what are you trying to achieve? What is your framework to do that?

**Participant:** The Kurdish people in Turkey want to solve this problem inside through democratic methods. It is clear that no solution can be achieved through military conflict. That is why we have had the 8<sup>th</sup> PKK ceasefire now for two years. The PKK and the Turkish army have not had conflicts apart from small incidents. In terms of a political solution, dialogue has been started. We are starting the negotiation phase or we hopefully expect it to start. Mostly in Turkey, the Kurdish people want to solve this by achieving democratic rights. Instead of PKK's target of an independent free Kurdistan, they want to live in a united Turkey with others. Demands include the strengthening of local administrations in Turkey; that every group should be able to teach their children in their mother tongues and that there is equal citizenship. This process will also be a democratic constitutional process. Today, compared to 10 years ago, we are in a very improved position. As people in this room we want to make our best contribution.

**Participant:** The Kurdish people are not living in Turkey alone, but also in Syria, Iraq and Iran. The upheavals there brought a new status to the Kurdish people in those countries. This also influences the Kurds in Turkey. The Kurdish problem started as a problem of Kurdistan. Now it is evolving into a problem that interests four different countries. This issue is not up to the Kurdish people living in Turkey alone but it will also be up to international forces. How are they going to intervene in the Kurdish problem, which is getting more and more complicated day by day?

**Pat Sheehan:** Thank you for coming. I wish you success. We had help from many parts of the world, from South Africa and by Mandela himself. For that reason and reasons of solidarity we also want to share our experience. We always want to help.

*End of session*



*Participants with Pat Sheehan and Rosie McCorley,  
outside of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Stormont Estate*

## Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015

### Session 10: Roundtable Discussion with Senator George Mitchell: Facilitating a Peace Process

Venue: Residence of the Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast

With: **George Mitchell**, chairman of the Good Friday Agreement negotiations, former US Senator



**George Mitchell:** In 2000 and 2001 I was appointed as chairman of the international commission to look into the violence in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine. There were five members of our commission; one was the former president of Turkey. He was a constructive member of our commission. I visited Ankara later as a US Special Envoy to the Middle East. I am glad to assist you.

**Kerim Yildiz:** It is a pleasure to meet you. Our group consists of 'Wisemen' and of journalists. The group is a part of DPI's effort to share the Irish

experience. We have learned a lot from you. The Mitchell principles are used worldwide. They are the standard principles to follow in this area. The peace process in Turkey is very new and we are concentrating on the importance of international assistance.

**George Mitchell:** As a first point, it is useful and helpful to study other processes as you are doing but you should always keep in mind that each conflict is unique. It is specific to the area and the people, there is no formula that once discovered can be applied everywhere. Every conflict that you meet, any solution is local and specific to that area. There are some conflicts including Northern Ireland that have benefitted from the presence of a third party or external presence. Those parties recognised that it is not their proper role to impose a solution on those involved but rather to help them discover a path to resolution or agreement. On the first day of negotiations in Northern Ireland, in June 1996, I told delegates that I did not come with an American peace plan. There was no Mitchell peace plan. If ever there were an agreement, it would be their agreement. Two years later after difficult negotiations is when my colleagues and I drafted an agreement and I made certain that every single word had been spoken or written by one of the delegates in Northern Ireland. So if you include a third party they need to know their limits and make sure that they do not want to impose. Other solutions in other examples have been imposed but there were different circumstances here in Northern Ireland.

The second thing is the importance of listening to all sides. You cannot get people to agree on a solution involving their lives and future if they do not feel they had the full opportunity to present their views. On my first day here I made an unwise statement, I said that I am a product of the US Senate. There was a rule of unlimited debate, any Senator can stand up and speak for as long as they want, even if there is no relationship

to the legislation. I listened for two years but at the end nobody could say that they had not been able to make their case. They had the full opportunity orally and in writing. They made their points over and over again. I cannot say that I am here and I want peace next Tuesday. I am here to listen, to help, to encourage, but I do not make people feel like they do not have chance to express and argue their opinion fully. Then they are much more likely to accept the outcome even if it is not 100 per cent their way.

As a third point, in Northern Ireland, there are political divisions within each of the main parties. Divisions on whether to go forward or whether to agree to this or that. That had to be recognised at the outset; we were not dealing with monolithic groups on the two sides. Everyone in our talks was an elected official. I, as a former politician, knew that the only way to agree would be if they could go before their constituencies saying that they had succeeded. Unless you have a total war with total defeat there is always compromise. I picture myself as a Northern Irish politician standing for his or her constituencies. I try to figure out what could be in an agreement that he can stand up and say that this is good for his constituents. Even recognising other parts of the agreement would be good. In Northern Ireland on both sides were people who were not fully satisfied with the process and not everything was reconciled, they wanted 100 per cent their way. That is not possible. In good faith negotiations, without total military victory, you cannot reconcile 100 per cent, which was a problem until today in Northern Ireland. After we got the agreement in April 1998 and after it had been approved in a referendum there were still horrific acts of violence. This is even after 71 per cent voted yes, and 95 per cent voted yes in the Republic. There were murders and bombings on both sides that could not be reconciled during the process. One of the principles I apply is to try to keep it going no



matter what happens. It would be a mistake in this type of negotiations to stop in cases of violence. That gives men of violence a veto power.

Also, at least in Northern Ireland, while we were in the process events would occur that would not permit leaders to be seen together. If a bomb went up in a Nationalist restaurant, their representative could not go to a meeting the next day as if nothing happened. I approached to keep the process going but not in a meeting together where each side would be separate. I would say, 'Let's keep talking, I come to you because you cannot be seen with the other group'. I was mostly listening and understanding what they were going through. In five days, or sometimes in two weeks, emotions would subside. I feel that is very important. You should not say at the outset that the process would be over when violence re-occurs; otherwise you yield the agenda to those who do not want progress.

As a final point, it is very difficult to get an agreement in a conflict with a long history as in Northern Ireland or the Kurdish issue. When you get an agreement you find that the work is just beginning. It is much harder to implement. As hard as it is to get people to say 'I agree', it is much harder to make them do it. We have to keep in mind that getting an agreement is the first step and not the most difficult. Critically important is that whoever is involved in the drafting presents it in a way that includes mechanism for continuing review, efforts to comply, and understanding that saying that 'I will do something' is not the same as doing it.

**Kerim Yildiz:** If one side, for example the government, is refusing to have international assistance even if the rebels insist what would be the best approach? How ethical would it be for a mediator or facilitator to support just one side of the conflict?

**George Mitchell:** The second question is easier; it is hard to see how you can ask a group to accept an external participant who is already in favour of one side. This was a big issue when I came here. I am American, I am a Democrat and I am Catholic. For many Unionists, those were three strikes against me before I started. They thought I had a bias because of my background. In a peculiar way that discussion went on for many years and helped me, I made decisions in a fair and objective way. I gradually gained the confidence of both sides. I had never expressed a previous view that I was for one side and against the other. I am not a perfect person but I do feel I am impartial and listen in good faith.

**Participant 3:** Was being American a handicap at first?

**George Mitchell:** It was at first. When the negotiations started I asked that I did not have any formal relationships with the US government. I had a small staff, three people, who had previously been paid by the US government. The British and Irish government insisted to pay their expenses; they wanted us to be independent. There is no doubt that the fact that I was American, a former official, a leader of the US Senate and close friend of the President was an important factor. I was not bound by anything. I kept the President informed and met him but never received instruction so I took it seriously that the British and Irish governments wanted me to be neutral.

**Participant:** Did you take responsibility after the Good Friday Agreement for the implementation?

**George Mitchell:** I did not personally, but one of my colleagues did. I was chairman of a three-member panel, one was the former Prime Minister of Finland chosen by the Irish, one was the Canadian de Chastelain chosen

by the UK and I was neutral and chairman. The Canadian general told me that he wanted me to know that he would be willing to stay on afterwards, particularly in the critical issue of decommissioning. He knew that I was under pressure not to stay since I had been away from home for many years. I had been here for five years. He stayed on the subject of decommissioning. Unexpectedly, one year after the agreement had been reached and approved, the process collapsed. The Prime Ministers of Britain and Ireland, and President Clinton asked me if I would go back and try to put it back together. I came back in July 1999 until December and we patched it up.

**Participant:** What was the most difficult subject of the negotiations?

**George Mitchell:** All subjects were difficult. The first issue was the issue of arms. The British government had taken the decision that Sinn Féin and the Unionist parties that had paramilitary organisations could not enter into the talks until they gave up their arms. This would have meant prior decommissioning. I chaired a commission in December 1995 and January 1996 on that question. We concluded that there was no possibility and that it was an unrealistic demand. It would not and could not be met. What we proposed was a mechanism to get into talks without prior decommissioning. We tried decommissioning during and after the process. Historically many negotiation errors have been committed, all attempts failed. The reason is that those who are actually fighting were not included in the talks. It seems simple in retrospect but it was politically impossible at the time. Nobody at the negotiating table was involved in fighting the war they wanted to end. We tried to figure out a way to bring in the parties in who were affiliated with paramilitaries but also still make sure that the constitutional parties would stay. These are the origins of the Mitchell principles: how can I get them in without the others walking

out. We sought to establish this balance.

**Participant:** What do you think about the issue of trust?

**George Mitchell:** There is a saying that money is the root of all evil. In peace processes the lack of trust is the root of all evil. It is by far the most important factor. After Northern Ireland, I did two tours in the Middle East and spent hundreds of hours with Abbas and Netanyahu. The fundamental problem was that they do not trust each other. Netanyahu does not believe that Abbas has the strength to implement and reach an agreement and Abbas thinks that Netanyahu does not want an agreement and just wants to placate us. If you are a leader and the process you are in cannot succeed you will not be willing to take risks and make concessions necessary for peace.

It is also clear that trusting someone and acting on the basis of that person's assertions are two different things. They develop incrementally both ways. You cannot begin negotiating and say 'let's have trust' by turning on the lights. You have to begin with small steps to establish trust in modest ways. Then you can take a little step that helps to build a little more trust back and forth. 17 years later and 22 years after my involvement, trust is still not fully there. It takes a generation. You need a minimum level to get to the first steps and from there it is an incremental process that takes years. When I first went to Northern Ireland they did not talk to each other. In all five years, never, not once, did I have everyone in the same room at the same time. There was always someone who walked out or was kicked out or did not want to come. That is the most important task and a great skill is required of an external actor. First steps is gaining their trust and then encouraging them to develop trust among themselves.

I said earlier, when the process collapsed in 1999, President Clinton and the Prime Ministers asked me to go back. When we settled that in November 1999 I wrote in my own handwriting, 'step one, Gerry Adams will make a statement at 9 in the morning'. We wrote down the statement, 'step two, Trimble will make a statement the next day at 1pm'. There were 18 steps and before the first step was taken everybody knew exactly what had happened. It took six months to negotiate every word. People were so mistrustful, if you change one word, even one comma, they would decline simply because there was no trust. They were reassured by the fact that they knew in advance each step that was to be taken. I would not let them have a copy of it before it was done, otherwise it would have been leaked to the press. It was always in my handwriting. People need confidence that they are not taken for a fool and that they would not have to make a difficult concession and then get embarrassed. The biggest fear for a politician is being seen as weak or foolish.

I made a speech last week in the US where we just observed the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War. I said, in World War I ten million people died because of four weak men: England, the Czar, the Kaiser, and the King of Austria-Hungary. They could not stand to be seen as weak so they overcompensated by acting tough and by calling for people to fight. It is amazing to look at those old videos and how in every country the crowds were cheering and troops were marching, like a wedding. The enthusiasm went down when the killing started. Political leaders are afraid of being taken for a fool or of looking weak. We have to figure out a way to give them assurance that they are not taken for a fool and won't look weak. If a process works, you will look very strong.

**Participant:** You had a huge power behind you despite being neutral yourself. Did you feel the gravity of being backed by a huge power although you were independent? In Turkey, with Abdullah Öcalan, our government does not want a third party in the negotiations. We want to form a domestic committee. To what extent could it be useful to have a domestic monitoring committee? While the PKK said the US should be the third party, our government has said there should be a national solution.

**George Mitchell:** Yes, it clearly helped that I am American, that I was an official and that I was close to the President. In addition, the two principle parties were the British and Irish government. We call the British government the mother country despite the revolution. Secondly, although we did not have the same political relationship with Ireland, we had personal relationships. 30 million Americans have Irish heritage. Under these circumstances, the presence of the US was important.

Concerning the second question, in this case the British government was opposed to outside involvement. When I met top MPs here at the beginning, they were opposed. They asked questions such as 'If Texas tries to secede from the US, would you invite a Brit to settle it?' Prime Minister Major deserved a lot of credit yet received little. He defied the segment of his party that did not want us involved. He agreed because I had already been here for a year and I got to know him and he felt comfortable. He told people that he knew me and that I was reasonable and would say 'he does not do crazy stuff'. It worked out. Ultimately it will be the decision of your government. I would not presume advice on that because I do not know enough. A government permitting third parties is usually seen by government leaders as a failure and as an encroachment on sovereignty.

They are always reluctant. It has to be done so that it is in their self-interest.

**Participant:** You said that parties should be given as much time as possible during talks. As it is prolonged, will it not be open to provocation and will fatigue not develop?

**George Mitchell:** It is probably the greatest challenge of judgment by anyone chairing: when to start them and when to end them. Trust in this case started high and went downhill for nearly two years. After 18 months, violence was rising so it was out of desperation that I concluded that we had to bring it to an end and force a decision. It was spiralling downward and we feared a full-scale resumption of conflict. The plan had a firm deadline. Two weeks before that, we had intense round-the-clock negotiations to bring it to an end. I had an objective for each day and we failed every day. We kept at it. We were one day late after the deadline. Right until five minutes before the agreements it could have gone either way. Next day hundreds of reporters were waiting. I was often asked, 'you set a deadline and you got an agreement, why did you not do that two years ago?' My answer is if that had happened it would not have worked. It is about timing, judgment, when and how to do it, and there is no way to say that in advance. You have to hope that the people involved know the right time.

It was a painful decision for delegates in the talks. Several careers ended and two were murdered. One of the reasons they did it was that they knew if they did not do it, the alternative would be worse. It would have been a return to full-scale conflict with much more death and destruction. Each time the conflict renewed it was worse than before because weapons were developing. One or two people can kill hundreds with little resources.

They did not want to do it but the alternative was worse.

I bought an air ticket back to the US that Saturday, 'look at that, I will be leaving on Saturday. There are 500 TV-crews outside and if we do not reach an agreement I will walk out of the door to the press and tell them that you have to explain why there is no agreement. If we do reach an agreement you go out first.' We got the agreement.

*End of session*



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015**

**Session 11: Roundtable Discussion with Jeffrey Donaldson  
MP: Perspectives on international Actors and the  
Decommissioning Body in Northern Ireland**

Venue: The Old Town Hall, Lisburn

With:

**Rt Honourable Jeffrey Donaldson MP**, member of the House of  
Commons for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)



**Jeffrey Donaldson:**<sup>25</sup> My party is the DUP, the largest political party in Northern Ireland. I am the party's chief negotiator on peace issues. I work closely with the First Minister and I have been a member of the British parliament in the House of Commons for 18 years. I served in the Northern Irish government as a minister and I was also involved in the negotiation process for peace. I served in the military during the conflict and specialised in counterterrorism.

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*25 Jeffrey Donaldson is a member of parliament for the Democratic Unionist Party and best known for his opposition to David Trimble (leader of the UUP) during the peace process.*

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The conflict would not be solved by military means and I recognised that. That is why I got involved in politics. Northern Ireland has changed a lot from the dark days to where we are today. The DUP is part of the government. We are always trying to reform those institutions, to enhance democracy and to move to a more stable democratic situation. Not everything runs smoothly and there are always problems to be addressed. We are still dealing with issues 16 years after the Good Friday Agreement.

I took part in the negotiations for the Stormont House Agreement, before there was St Andrews, Hellsbury Castle. There were three other agreements since then leading to agreement about elements of the peace process. The first fundamental thing about the peace process is that it is not a one-off, single agreement. A 30-year conflict can take many years to solve. We have to rebuild a society damaged by conflict. With the Stormont House Agreement we finally have ways to move forward. It establishes new institutions to investigate unsolved killings and to offer victims the opportunity to find out more about the deaths.

Setting up a reconciliation group is the next step. Communities are still divided and although we have moved a long way, the wound is still there unhealed. There may be new bandages but the wound is still there and the divisions are. The next stage is to start healing, removing the peace walls. We set the target to remove them all by 2021, for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Northern Ireland coming into existence. It needs lot of work. We are not just dealing with physical issues; to stop violence we have to change the way people think. The mind set has to change. If attitudes do not change then the risk of violence reoccurring is still there. The next generation may repeat our mistakes. We are not blind to the need to complete the journey.

Please do not have the impression that the peace process has not been successful, it has been. Last year, no one was killed. That is a big thing coming from the dark days in the past when hundreds were killed every year. We have been dealing with symptoms of the problem and now we are dealing with the root causes of divisions. It has driven people apart; they are segregated in some areas. People need to feel comfortable. We need to remove things leading to fear and suspicion, to dismantle feelings that can stir up tensions ending in violence. Society is being transformed. Our political institutions work reasonably well but it could be better. We need reform to make them more normal. We need to get more of a parliamentary style with a government based on elections, whereas here we have mandatory coalitions. We want a voluntary coalition where, after elections, parties coalesce and negotiate with each other and with an official opposition. It is important to resolve issues that gave rise to conflict.

I would like to make two final points. The construction of the peace process is very important. Prior to the Good Friday Agreement, many initiatives were attempted but we did not achieve success until we moved away from concentrating on the constitutional issues. We built peace about relationships, around human relationships. In Ireland there are three sets of relationships: the most important is between the people living here, the second is between North and South and the third between East and West. We constructed our process around those three sets of relationships. We divided it into three strands to reflect that. We had to step back from it all: how do we live together, how do we relate to each other? We built institutions for those three dimensions. We do not pretend that it has been perfect here but it worked. Lessons can be learned from our situation. I am invited to many countries to talk about that. I hope you will find those lessons.



*Speaker Rt Honourable Jeffrey Donaldson MP*

**Participant:** It is not correct to compare Turkey and Northern Ireland. When I read something about you I had a question in my mind – there was a huge change in your attitude towards the peace process. We have parties in Turkey close to your position and they are in the first stage. Some are strictly against a peace process and think that the proper answer should be violence. What were your breaking points and transitions? What was the ‘flow’? How was your transition from counterterrorism to being a politician?

**Jeffrey Donaldson:** That goes to the heart of the peace process. For me, one of the difficult decisions I had to take was to enter negotiations in 1997 with Sinn Féin. They had murdered members of my family, and some comrades in the army. Here I was being asked to negotiate my future with the people responsible for that. I recognised that we can either go on killing or sit together to resolve differences. Dialogue should have a chance. I was not happy with 1998, it did not go far enough in terms of holding armed groups to account and ensure that they deliver

disarmament. This proved to be the case. The agreement said they should disarm in two years and they did not. Yet the compromise in return was the prisoner release. After two years all prisoners had been released and not a single weapon handed in. My problem was with the agreement, not the peace, but that it was flawed. The next one solved disarming.

We need to persuade people that dialogue is better than violence even if they are sceptical about political progress. I have worked in Colombia, talked to Guerrilla groups in the Middle East and in Burma and worked in the Philippines. I have gone out to people. I sought to persuade them that violence is not going to give them their objective. Therefore they should at least try dialogue. There is no magic solution. It is an individual thing and for me it was realising that neither side was going to win. We had to try politics and dialogue. Human emotion is powerful in any peace process and the longer the conflict goes on, the older the combatants get. They get children and grandchildren and they start thinking about their children's future. Is that what the future looks like for my children? This was an important dynamic. My generation began asking, 'do we have to do this for the next generation?'

The government at the time had an advertising campaign. It was very successful in changing what people thought; many did not believe violence would ever end because they were immune, acclimatised and accepted it reluctantly. The government ran a campaign which was very graphic showing terrorists coming into a public place and killing people. It asked, 'does it have to be like this all the time?' One showed a member of an armed group talking to his son. The son wanted to play football and the father said he did not have time because he had to fight. One day the son joined armed groups. These adverts were publicised over a two to three year period during peak viewing time on TV. It changed

the attitudes and people began thinking 'Why are we accepting this?' If we cannot influence individuals, we have to try to influence the ones influencing them. Advertising was not sending a political message but it was challenging attitude and mind set. The change in the public mood helped to change the minds of leaders of armed groups.

**Participant:** You were in the army in a counterterrorism regiment. To what extent did the attitude of the army keep pace with the transition?

**Jeffrey Donaldson:** The army fully supported the peace from day one. In the UK, there was no question of the army being superior in any way to politics. The army always took direction from political leadership. When the government decided to engage, the army fully supported it. You will see that from reports. They recognised that they could not defeat terrorists and that the insurgency would continue for many years. They thought that they we could contain it, at a low level, but they would never be able to eradicate it. 'We cannot defeat them militarily'. Out of five attempts, the army probably prevented four but it only takes one successful attempt. Terrorists operated on the basis that the army has to be successful every time and they only have to be successful once. The army was very supportive.

**Participant:** You need to deal with past. What do you mean and what elements does it have?

**Jeffrey Donaldson:** There are a number of elements. Firstly, there are over 3000 unsolved killings. No one has been brought to justice. Those families still want justice. We have established a new investigative body to investigate those unsolved killings. We know which organisations were responsible but not which individuals. This is the first thing. Then there

are many allegations on both sides about what happened. We set up an independent commission to investigate and make the results of incidents available. They will go to the armed groups and state authorities. It is about justice and truth or information recovery. Then, because we had 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland, there is a high level of people suffering from trauma, mental health problems. We will establish a unit within the health service to increase support for those people. We will also consider the payment of pension to victims who have severe psychical injuries.

**Participant:** The Good Friday Agreement means self-determination to the Irish in the North. If there was a referendum in Northern Ireland and if a majority wants to unite with Ireland what would your attitude be?

**Jeffrey Donaldson:** This goes to the heart of our differences here. We support the principle of self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland. I think it is important as a Unionist that if the result of a referendum shows a majority in support of a united Ireland, I would accept it. You cannot on the one hand argue for self-determination and oppose the outcome if you do not like the result, particularly not with violent means. However, others may oppose by violence.

I would want to say that in a referendum today, an overwhelming majority would favour the status quo. That includes Protestants and Catholics, because the people accept that what we have is better than what we had before. Often, conflicts arise because people fear their position is threatened. Unionists in Northern Ireland felt if they make any concessions to the minority, they would weaken their own position, that sharing power would weaken the Unionist position. The irony and real benefit of the peace process is that the opposite has occurred. The

Unionists are now sharing power and the result is that in all opinion polls the support for the union with Britain is increasing. This tells me that holding on to all power and excluding others because you feel threatened is not a solution at all. It does not give you the security that you seek. The decision to share power has resulted in our position being more secure now. Catholics now say they are treated fairly and some say equal. 'Why would we want to change that? We feel a strong affinity with the South but we are happy to have our own government here, to have strong links to Ireland and to Britain.' I do not think that will change soon.

To illustrate that, I live next door to a Catholic family and I carry a UK passport. My next-door neighbours travel with an Irish passport. Part of the agreement is that any citizen in Northern Ireland, as self-determination on the most basic level, can choose their identity. It lies with the individual. Everyone can choose whether he or she is Irish or British or both, if I want I can have both. Most people here accept that that is a good way of dealing with this issue. To change that would be a mess. I support self-determination both for Northern Irish people as a whole and for each individual. No identity can be imposed! This is the most important lesson that can be drawn. You cannot impose an identity on someone. In the modern world we accommodate difference and this even involves different identities inside our own entity.

**Participant:** There is equality of rights and so the issue of political representation is solved. Why is the political solution not enough? Why the depth of difference?

**Jeffrey Donaldson:** One of the legacies of the conflict is that, although armed groups cease to operate, they continue to operate on a local level, sometimes as criminal gangs. They are still trying to control local areas.



In order to maintain their areas of control, like in New York City, gangs create fear. This is also part of the legacy, mainly in Belfast. In this city here there are no peace walls. In Belfast, criminal gangs formed out of paramilitaries still create fear in their communities and intimidate the local population. That's why there is reluctance to bring the peace walls down, out of fear that gangs would go back to violence. We need to address this. We established a new programme called 'Together Building a United Community'. We spend a lot of resources in divided communities dealing with residual problems and hope that by 2021 all peace walls are gone. The political process has not failed to reach people but armed groups are still operating as criminal gangs. There is still a level of fear. The Mafia uses fear too and they are not terrorists but they use the same tactics.

*End of session*

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015**

**Session 12: Roundtable Discussion with Former Prisoners:  
The Role of International Actors in Civil Society Engagement  
with the Good Friday Agreement**

Venue: Coiste, West Belfast

With:

**Michael Culbert**, former IRA member

**Eibhlin Glenholmes**, former IRA member



**Eleanor Johnson:** Coiste is an important civil society organisation in Belfast today. Michael Culbert, Director of Coiste, was a social worker until 1978 when he was sentenced to 16 years. Afterwards, he completed a Masters degree and worked with Coiste first as a counsellor then as director. Evelyne also works with them and previously was one of Scotland Yard's most wanted suspects and was on the run for a few years.

**Michael Culbert:** Thank you for coming. I will tell you about our motivations and backgrounds, why we participated in armed conflict against the British government and why we now do not find it appropriate to do so. I used to be social worker and at the age of 28 I went into prison charged with shooting dead a policeman and was given a life sentence. I was released in 1993, which coincided with the IRA ceasefire. As political prisoners, we had been discussing that was an option for two to three years. The Republican leadership was engaged in talks on the outside. The cessation of violence ended ten months later after the escalation of violence with the bombings in England. Subsequently there was another cessation, which has held since. The Good Friday Agreement was the outwork of that. Integral to that agreement was an agreement about the political prisoner community at the time. 400 IRA members were in jails in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The governments agreed that prisoners had to be dealt with satisfactorily for a political settlement to take place. Within two years, all the prisoners were released. This gave way to the emergence of a political process in which Sinn Féin participated despite being engaged with most of the former Republican fighters. It exists until today.

My organisation was set up and mostly funded by the EU to work at reconciling communities and building better relationships with political parties including former army personnel and former pro-state illegal

fighters. I am not engaged in peace keeping though we need to build post-conflict peace.

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** I am the granddaughter of an IRA fighter who was interned by the British in the 1940s and I am the daughter of an IRA fighter who was interned by the British in the 1970s. My father was condemned for a long sentence in prison. When I was 16, I was a victim of an assassination attempt by pro-British forces. This was not because I was threat but because my father was the officer commanding in the Long Kesh concentration camp. The tactic was to attack the families of Republican leaders. They were not afraid for their own lives but for the lives of their families. I was injured but I was okay and from then I became an active member of the Republican forces.

At that time we were not conscious and we did not understand colonialist occupation because we were too young, but we did know oppression. We saw that when our people marched for human rights, equality and for 'one man one vote'. Unemployment among Nationalists was at 85 per cent; from the day you were born to the day you die you would never have a job and never have the same access to education. We were second-class citizens, hostages. With the global civil rights movement, our people began to march peacefully. They were met with the full fury of the Orange state, which protected the Loyalists. The green people were living in an orange state. I became committed to the ideals of justice and equality for all. When the minority holds no power, has no political representation and has no international defence everyone suffers. This includes the oppressors. We resisted peacefully and we tried to do the right thing. The usual response from the British government was the same as it had been for the past 800 years: oppression. They opened internment camps in the 1970s in Western Europe where there was the process of internment

without trial. The British would have been criticised if they did it anywhere else. Oppression does not crush rebellion: it breeds resistance. People felt disengaged from the British government. They had no part in their future and the creation of their society. We were foreigners in our own land.



*Guest speakers Eibhlin Glenholmes and Michael Culbert*

In the 1980s I was named 'Scotland Yard's most wanted' for questioning on the Brighton bombing over an attempt to kill Thatcher. I was also wanted for the killing of the commander of the regiment that killed 13 on Bloody Sunday, for the murder of the top anti-bombing expert of Scotland Yard, for the attack against the then British Attorney General, Lord Havers, amongst other actions. In 1985, the Irish government for extradition captured me. I won the short trial but I was rearrested one year later for the same offenses. I again faced extradition and I defeated that case. I left court and disappeared from the public view. The British

media reports say that in the years following my release, I was IRA representative in Latin America and that I forged relationships between forces of the IRA and other revolutionary movements of the indigenous.

I was a first beneficiary of the Good Friday Agreement, as well as others on the run, and returned to the North in 2001. Following the cessation of the IRA, I became a full-time member of Sinn Féin. I was selected to the national leadership of Sinn Féin and I retained in the following election. I then worked with the ex-prisoners network because there is still massive discrimination against political prisoners. They are in some cases unemployable, unable to adopt children and cannot travel freely. In counterbalance to ordinary prisoners, they are still victims of the conflict. Our commitment is to equality for all so we represent them as oppressed people.

**Participant 7:** Did you experience disappearances of people under custody? In Turkey we are facing many of these disappearances.

**Michael Culbert:** No, the British had the direct policy of defeating the IRA, not of restoring peace. In their campaign the standard procedure in colonies is that the coloniser brings the army in and they control the territory and after a while they bring in civil servants to administer. They then remove some of their troops and use locally recruited troops and then the same with civil servants. If locals are colonised, they always need a type of force. It happened in the Middle East: in Yemen, Aden and in Africa. It is a common thing and it happened here as well. The British army introduced 'shoot-to-kill' for IRA personnel and it has now been proven that they then introduced illegally, locally recruited personnel to kill IRA personnel. The British government did not have to disappear people. They instead just killed them through illegally recruited people

armed by the British army. This has been proven!

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** Given the size of Northern Ireland, unlike Chile or Guatemala, it is impossible to effectively disappear. Arrests were noted and people were seen at some point. We lived in barricaded areas to defend ourselves. When British forces came in, women would take tin cans or bin lids and alert everyone that they were coming. The British did not need to make us disappear; they just killed us with impunity.

**Michael Culbert:** As a major legacy today, up to fifty known cases have been waiting for a coroner's court report for 30 years. It is still not officially declared under what circumstances death occurred. We know what happened but we want to get what happened acknowledged. The coroners still have to deal with them.

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** It was heart breaking for families of IRA victims to find the bodies. They had been executed at night and often people who did the killings are no longer alive. The IRA has worked with relevant organisations to help find the bodies.

**Participant:** Bobby Sands participated in a hunger strike when they tried to force him to wear prison uniform. We had something similar in Turkey. How did that continue? Was there continued imposition to wear uniforms?

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** We are well informed about Turkey. Hunger strikes strike fear to our hearts. It is a last resort of desperation. We quickly understand that when we say political status, we are political prisoners. On the 30<sup>th</sup> April you were a political prisoner and on the 1<sup>st</sup> May you were a criminal. People did not understand, nor did international actors, 'what

do you mean by political status?' We had to explain what that meant. The British government claimed that it was an impossible demand. We put forward five demands: the right to wear our own clothes, the right to education within prisons, the right to associate with our comrades, the right to receive one parcel and letter a week and the right to receive one visit a week. Those were considered impossible demands.

When the hunger strike began we knew we would shortly be carrying coffins. It was the worst period of my life and the worst for my people. We still live with the legacy of the hunger strike. We watched ten young men carried out of that prison. They died to defend us and to proclaim to the world that we were not criminals, that we were political rebels. It reinforces to me how easily that could have been avoided, simply by talking and negotiating. We were all scared by 1981 and we will never forget those months. Is it always that power makes you right? If you can shoot, should you do it? Thatcher showed she was stronger and tougher than any man but what kind of man was that? Those were not actions of true men or women. Every child lost was somebody's son. We all bleed the same colour. Every mother's tears are the same whether they are Irish or British. All those tears could have been saved if people would talk and listen. Our hunger strike cost us dearly. We are more sensitive to those situations in other places.

**Michael Culbert:** Bobby Sands was a normal man but a symbol for the world, a recognised symbol of resistance. I knew him well and I knew the reasons for the hunger strike. From our situation, the hunger strike was not at the beginning of things but at the end. The British government had a policy of criminalising our armed struggle. One way to achieve that was by getting the captured fighters to indicate that it was not a political struggle but a fight. We did not give way when the British government



wanted us to say that we were not political. The prison uniform was the main indicator of accepting criminalisation. The issue was whether we should wear the uniform but the core reason was whether to accept being criminalised or not.

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** A little story helps to remember whom the people were who did this. One person was sentenced without political status. Kieran was 18, the first IRA prisoner to be taken to the H-Blocks of Long Kesh prison, which was a new prison especially built for 'criminals' like us as we were labelled as such. He was surrounded by big prison officers, all of who were anti-nationalist - that's how they got the job. They screamed at him, threatened him and told him to put the uniform on. They thought if they can break the first one, the second one would be easier. Kieran Nugent was quaking with fear, shivering and said, 'if you want me to wear that you will have to nail it to my back.'

**Michael Culbert:** Once the hunger strike ended the British government gave us what we wanted. For a short period of time we had status. Why did they allow him to die? They were testing IRA personnel but following that we had political status.

**Participant:** You were caught in Dublin, Evelyne, what was the Irish government's attitude?

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** They collaborated with the British government all along in oppression of the Republicans and Nationalists. Under the constitution they were obligated to proactively recover the North. That was in the Irish constitution but it was never done. They were looking in the future and saw a spill over of the popular revolution probably before the IRA did. What if the same attitude of challenging the system would

have translated to other parts of the country? 26 counties ignored the North; they would have made it disappear if they could. They feared spill over in support of Sinn Féin, which terrified the establishment in Dublin. This support was non-existent.

**Michael Culbert:** Today, half of Sinn Féin's representatives in parliament are former prisoners. Two former political prisoners are in the European Parliament. Throughout Ireland in local city councils, there are hundreds of former political prisoners. This is an indicator of not only whom we actually are but also that the people voting for us know what we were. We had public support back then as well as today.

**Participant:** Did you have integration programmes for IRA militants after their release from prison? Did you manage to achieve what you wanted?

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** We always rejected the word 'reintegration'. We were never 'not integrated'. It implies that you come from somewhere away from society. Our society was the IRA, our fathers and our brothers and sisters, our families. Getting out of prison was coming home. They were greeted and welcomed by each small area they lived in. Immediately locals would start knocking on the doors looking for their advice, wisdom and leadership. They became community leaders. They were then elected counsellors as a measure of respect that our community holds for our ex-prisoners. They had fought for them, risked their lives, lost families and they had no money for anything. The most expensive accessory to have in life is a political prisoner in your family. It cost a lot of money. You had to feed and clothe them while they were in prison. Some families had five or six and when they came out we had invested in them. We looked at them for leadership, elected them to the new Assembly and to the

European Parliament. Martina Anderson, an MEP and is also a former IRA prisoner for 13 years. Jennifer McCann, our Junior Minister and also spent 12 years in prison. Carál Ní Chuilín, our Minister for Culture, spent eight years in prison and Gerry Adams had also been interned.

We look to political prisoners to lead. They were not gunmen for nationalism or looking for a fight but instead were forced to defend our people when there was no other option. You cannot continually defend without proactively going on the attack. The IRA was small and poor. We had no outside support. Our objective was to force the British government, with its massive army and resources, to the negotiation table. Everything else came after that.

### **Participant asks a question about DDR.**

**Michael Culbert:** In our situation that never happened for multiple reasons. The main reason was that the British government could not engage in that, it would have to acknowledge that the IRA somehow defended them. We were seen as criminals. Technically, when the guerrilla war was coming to an end, the EU got engaged instead of the British government for assisting re-engagement of former activists. That's why the EU funds my organisation. We set up the structure and are funded by Europe. We are now in a position we could not have been in 20 years ago. Our party is in a powerful position and the military campaign was essential to build on politically. Normally it does not work that way but in this case we are convinced that the military campaign is what gave rise to the politics. I do not see equality in Turkey; I think our situation is unique. Our story is unique to Ireland. We had the advantage of having a British Prime Minister who wanted peace.

The American president wanted to end suffering in Ireland. It was a coalescence of factors leading to negotiations between the government and the guerrilla.

**Participant:** After the normalisation process violence has come to an end. We still see serious isolation and the separation of communities. What kind of measures can be taken to ensure communication between the two communities? Your party, Sinn Féin, now has political power.

**Michael Culbert:** The major problem is the narrative of why and what happened. If we go back 500 years, politics was religious. Today we have an interpretation in religious terms of the conflict instead of political terms. Do we ever talk about Buddhist-Christian wars in Southeast Asia? No, we call it the Vietnam War; we talk about it in political terms. So what is the narrative about here? In Liverpool and Birmingham people oppose each other politically, in Turkey as well. Why don't all people in Liverpool get along? There were political differences. What's wrong with that? At one stage the differences were so strong that violence was used and now the enemy is the opposition. People oppose each other and that is fine as long as nobody gets killed.

**Eibhlin Glenholmes:** There is not even an agreed line or story about who was fighting whom and why. If you go across the road where the Loyalist live you can see that some live in conditions as bad as our people did: in the same houses, without bathrooms. It is the same life. They would tell you that their enemy was the IRA. If you talk to state militias, they were fighting the IRA. If you talked to the RUC, they were fighting the IRA. The IRA was only fighting the British government. Other agents brought themselves onto the stage to fight the IRA. We had enough to do fighting the stat. We did not need another battle. I understand their

loyalty to the British crown. They are British. That's all right. I am Irish. The British government have no rights in my country. When we had to fight them, we fought them. Now we do not have to fight them but we will negotiate them out of our country. I identified with the people across the wall as they are from the same socio-economic group, the poor. The only difference is how we see our future. Their loyalty to the crown has left them heartbroken, they feel betrayed by the British government negotiating with the IRA. Our responsibility is to build their community as much as ours.

**Participant:** Are you struggling with the effect of torture in society? Do you have organisations dealing with social trauma?

**Michael Culbert:** Yes, this is one. We have two in Belfast, and two full-time people going out to different areas. We operate a 24h telephone line. We have acknowledged that trauma will come through eventually. We engaged psychiatrists. We further talked about research in Holland, which showed an upsurge in erratic behaviour by elderly people in the 1970s. They had been members of the guerrilla resistance against the Germans. When the war ended, they went back to civilian life without assistance.

*End of session*

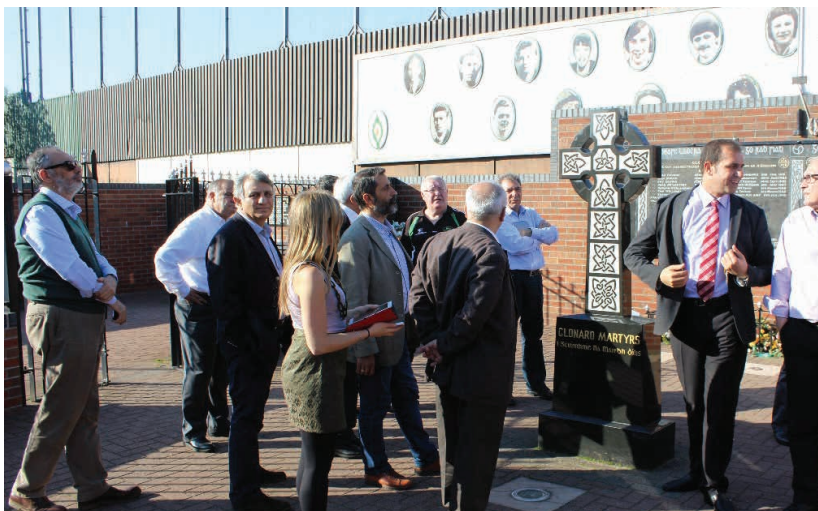
**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015**

**Private Tour of Belfast's 'Peace Walls' and Interface Areas**

**With:**

**Jack Duffin, tour guide on the Nationalist side**

**Tour guide on the Loyalist side**





To conclude the visit, participants were taken on two separate tours through the interface area of West Belfast, where predominantly 'peace walls' separate Nationalist and Unionist communities. They serve to prevent violent attacks from extremists of one community against the other. Murals praising paramilitaries are still seen in the working-class neighbourhoods, now complemented by 'international murals' to give attention to prisoners and those oppressed in the whole world.

On the Nationalist side, right next to the 'peace wall', there is a memorial for 'martyrs' on Bombay Street that we also visited. On the Unionist side, the tour ended at a memorial on the infamous Shankhill Road, next to the site of a tragic alleged IRA retaliation bombing which killed four civilians instead of the targeted Loyalist paramilitaries in 1971.

## Participants

1. **Ahmet Faruk Unsal** – Wise person, human rights activist, head of MAZLUM-DER civil society organisation
2. **Erol Katircioğlu** – academic, TV Commentator
3. **Esra Elmas – Senior DPI Advisor and Bilgi University Academic**
4. **Etyen Mahcupyan** – Wise person and senior advisor to Prime Minister, Armenian intellectual
5. **Kadir İnanir** – Actor, Wise person
6. **Mehmet Avni Özgürel** – Journalist, Wise person
7. **Nazan Haydari Pakkan** – İstanbul Bilgi University, Head of Media and Communication Systems
8. **Oral Çalışlar** – Wise person, journalist, columnist for liberal newspaper
9. **Öztürk Türkdöğän** – Wise person, head of IHD



- (human rights association in Turkey)
10. **Sevinç Özcan** – senior advisor to the Prime Minister
  11. **Vahap Çoşkun** – Wise person, academic
  12. **Yusuf Şevki Hakyemez** – Wise person, academic, deputy dean of university in Turkey
  13. **Ali Bayramoğlu** – Journalist, Wise person, DPI Council of Experts member
  14. **Eren Buğlalılar** – Interpreter
  15. **Kerim Yıldız** – Director, DPI
  16. **Eleanor Johnson** – Head of Programmes and Research, DPI
  17. **Benno Zogg** – Assistant and note taker, DPI

### **Participants coded**

1. **Ahmet Faruk Unsal** – Participant 1
2. **Erol Katircioğlu** – Participant 10
3. **Etyen Mahcupyan** – Participant 3
4. **Kadir İnanir** – Participant 11
5. **Mehmet Avni Özgürel** – Participant 2
6. **Nazan Haydari Pakkan** – Participant 9
7. **Oral Çalışlar** – Participant 4
8. **Öztürk Türkdöğän** – Participant 7
9. **Sevinç Özcan** – Participant 12
10. **Vahap Çoşkun** – Participant 5
11. **Yusuf Şevki Hakyemez** – Participant 6
12. **Ali Bayramoğlu** – Participant 8

## Others

1. **His Excellency Necip Egüz**, Turkish Ambassador to Ireland
2. Şenay **Egüz**, Ambassador's wife
3. **Işıl Gürler Ileri**, Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission, Turkish Embassy to Ireland
4. **Cemal Sangu**, First Secretary, Turkish Embassy to Ireland
5. **Susan Conlon**, Deputy Director Enlargement and West Balkans, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
6. **Sir David Reddaway**, former British Ambassador to Ireland, member of DPI Council of Experts
7. **Rory Beatty**, Conflict Resolution Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
8. **Padraig McGovern**, tour official at Leinster House
9. **Jack Duffin**, tour guide on the Nationalist side
10. **Tour guide on the Loyalist side**

## Speakers

1. **William Devas**, Chief Executive Director of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation
2. **Kevin Kelly**, Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
3. **Émer Deane**, Director of the Anglo-Irish Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
4. **Helena Keleher**, Deputy Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

5. **Ralph Victory**, Director of the Communications Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
6. **Frank Feighan TD**, member of Dáil, Fine Gael
7. **Ruairí Quinn TD**, member of Dáil, Labour
8. **Seán Crowe TD**, member of Dáil, Sinn Féin
9. **Bertie Ahern**, Former *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister of Ireland)
10. **Liz O'Donnell**, Former Minister of State
11. **Dermot Ahern**, Former Irish Member of Parliament
12. **Michael McAvoy**, Deputy Director of the Engagement Group, Northern Ireland Office
13. **Pat Sheehan MLA**, member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Sinn Féin
14. **Rosie McCorley MLA**, member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Sinn Féin
15. **George Mitchell**, chairman of the Good Friday Agreement negotiations, former US Senator
16. **Rt Honourable Jeffrey Donaldson MP**, member of the House of Commons for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
17. **Michael Culbert**, former IRA member
18. **Eibhlín Glenholmes**, former IRA member

## DPI Board Members

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**Kerim Yildiz (Director)**, Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in International Human Rights Law and minority rights, and has written extensively on international Human Rights mechanisms and International Humanitarian Law. Kerim is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011.



**Nick Stewart QC (Chair)**, Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom. Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.



**Prof. Penny Green (Secretary)**, Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).



**Priscilla Hayner:** Co-founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organizations.



**Arild Humlen,** Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee, Norway. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.



**Prof. David Petrasek:** Associate Professor, Graduate School of Public and International affairs, formerly Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, he has worked extensively on human rights, humanitarian and conflict resolution issues, including for Amnesty International (1990-96), for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-98), for the International Council on Human Rights Policy (1998-02), and as Director of Policy at the HD Centre (2003-07).



**Antonia Potter**, Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, MediatEUr, and Terre des Hommes.



**Jacki Muirhead**, Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

## DPI Council of Experts

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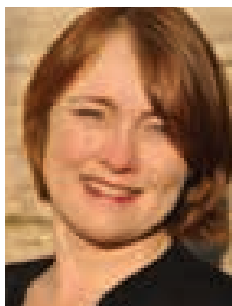
### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.



### **Dr Mehmet Asutay**

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. Areas of focus include Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format.



**Prof. Christine Bell:** Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.



**Cengiz Çandar:** Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

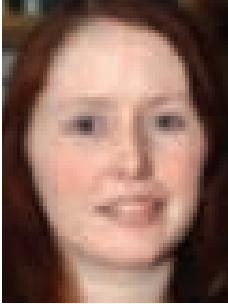


**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.



**Prof. Mervyn Frost:** Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.





**Dr. Edel Hughes:** Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.



**Dr Salomón Lerner Febres:** Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.



**Martin Griffiths:** Former Deputy Head, Kofi Annan's UN Mission to Syria. Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex-Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.



**Avila Kilmurray:** A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.



**Prof. Ram Manikkalingam:** Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.



**Bejan Matur:** Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).



**Monica McWilliams:** Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.



**Jonathan Powell:** Jonathan Powell is founder and CEO of Inter Mediate, an NGO devoted to conflict resolution working in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Jonathan was Chief of Staff to Tony Blair from 1995 to 2007 and from 1997 was also Chief British Negotiator on Northern Ireland. From 1978-79 he was a broadcast journalist with the BBC and Granada TV and from 1979 to 1994 a British Diplomat.



**Sir Kieran Prendergast:** Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.



**Prof. Naomi Roht-Arriaza:** Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.



**Rajesh Rai:** Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He is Founding Director of HIC, a Community Centred NGO based in Cameroon, and of Human Energy (Uganda) Ltd, and was previously a Director of The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Rajesh also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Council and internationally, in India, Africa, Asia, and the USA.



**Prof. Dr. Mithat Sancar:** Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on constitutional citizenship and transitional justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



**Prof. Dr. Sevtap Yokuş:** Professor of Law at the University of Kocaeli. She is a widely published expert in the areas of constitutional law and human rights law, and is a practitioner in the European Court of Human Rights.



**David Reddaway:** He now works as an adviser, board member and consultant in the private and university sectors. He was previously British Ambassador to Turkey and to Ireland; High Commissioner to Canada; UK Special Representative for Afghanistan; and Charge d'Affaires in Iran, where he had first worked during the Iranian Revolution. He also served in Argentina; India; and Spain. He was a Fellow at Harvard University and a volunteer teacher in Ethiopia. He read History at Cambridge, and Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.



**Mark Muller QC:** Senior advocate at Doughty Street Chambers (London) and the Scottish Faculty of Advocates (Edinburgh) specialised in public international law and human rights. He has many years' experience of advising on conflict resolution, mediation, ceasefire and power-sharing and first-hand experience of a number of conflict zones, including Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria. Since 2005 he is Senior Advisor to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Beyond Conflict and Inter-Mediate. He is also a Harvard Law School Fellow and former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee and Head of Rule of Law for the Bar Council. He is the founder of Beyond Borders – a Scottish initiative dedicated to fostering peace and international understanding through cultural dialogue. He currently acts as Senior Mediation Expert for the Standby Team of Mediators of the UN Department of Political Affairs.



**Joost Lagendijk:** Columnist for the Turkish dailies 'Zaman' and 'Today's Zaman', and a lecturer on EU Institutions and Policies at the Suleyman Shah University, Istanbul. He is also the author and editor of a number of books on European border issues, US and EU foreign policy strategies, and modern Turkey. From 1998 – 2009 Mr Lagendijk was a Dutch Green Left Party Member of European Parliament, where he focused on foreign policy and EU enlargement. He has also served as Chair of the Parliament's Turkey Delegation and the rapporteur for the Parliament on the Balkans and Kosovo. From 2009 to 2012, Mr Lagendijk worked as a senior adviser at the Istanbul Policy Center in Istanbul.



**Prof. Dr Ahmet Insel:** A managing editor of Turkey editing house Iletisim and Head of the Department of Economics in Galatasaray University, Istanbul. Also a Professor at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. Author and columnist.



**Ali Bayramoğlu:** Writer and political commentator. He is a columnist for the Turkish daily newspaper Yeni Safak. Member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission Established by Prime Minister Erdoğan.



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