



# A Green Paper on Irish Unity

Sinn Féin discussion paper

February 2005



## Letter from Gerry Adams MP

A Chara,

Ireland is moving towards unity and independence. Therefore it is both necessary and prudent for the Irish people to engage on the shape, form and nature that a re-united Ireland will take.

More than 80 years has passed since the First Dáil was established in Dublin but in all of this time no Irish Government has ever produced a Green Paper on Irish unity. No Irish Government has ever set out a strategy, produced an outline of a legislative programme or an economic analysis, or set out the actions that would need to be taken to give effect to Irish unity.

Sinn Féin believes that there is a responsibility on the Irish government to bring forward a strategy to achieve national self-determination, Irish re-unification, political independence, sovereignty and national reconciliation.

In this discussion document we are calling on the Irish Government to publish a Green Paper and to begin the practical planning for Irish unity now. We are also calling for widespread consultation at home and abroad. I hope that unionists will be prepared to take part in such a process and put forward their vision for the future and to consider, discuss and engage with the rest of the Irish people about the nature and form a new Ireland will take.

Sinn Féin is setting out our roadmap to Irish unity and we believe that others should do the same. The primary objective at this time has to be to sustain the peace process and to build the political process and the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin is wedded to this. But we continue to work for an end of the union with Britain and for Irish reunification.

Provision in the Good Friday Agreement for a poll on re-unification lends an urgency to planning forward for re-unification now.

Sinn Féin is launching a campaign to get the Irish Government to initiate this process and bring forward a Green Paper on Irish unity. We will be taking this campaign to every county in Ireland and will also seek international support.

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**Gerry Adams, MP, MLA**

President of Sinn Féin



# Executive Summary

- 1) There is a political onus and national responsibility on the Irish Government to formulate and implement a strategy to promote and achieve the national and democratic objectives of national self-determination, Irish territorial reunification, political independence, sovereignty, and national reconciliation
- 2) Consultation, engagement, persuasion and negotiation, with a view to securing active support for a united Ireland, must be the means towards these ends. By definition this must involve all of the people of this island, including all of the social partners that constitute civil society. Re-convening the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation could help in facilitating such a discussion.
- 3) It must involve a negotiation with the British Government.
- 4) It must be underpinned by a meaningful and substantial peace dividend from both governments.
- 5) Such a strategy needs to have an international dimension which includes seeking specific forms of support from popular and political opinion in Britain; the Irish diaspora and the international community
- 6) The Taoiseach should commission a Green Paper on Irish unity to be completed within one year.
- 7) The aim should be to identify steps and measures, which can promote and assist a successful transition to a united Ireland and to develop detailed planning for a new state and a new society that all Irish people can share. All stakeholders in society on this island must be given an opportunity to take ownership of the debate and be part of the process this initiates.
- 8) The Green Paper should be referred to a specially dedicated Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on Irish Unity to monitor, assess and report progress on implementation.
- 9) A Minister of State should be appointed by the Irish Government with the dedicated and specific responsibility of driving forward and developing policy options and strategies to advance the outcomes of the Green Paper and to direct and co-ordinate the Government's all-Ireland policies.
- 10) Participation by people resident in the North, in the democratic life of the nation should be facilitated and include Northern representation in the Houses of the Oireachtas and voting rights in presidential elections.
- 11) The Irish Government, in consultation with the social partners, the business and agricultural sectors, the trade unions, the community and NGO sector must begin the process of co-ordinating economic planning on an all-Ireland basis.





## 1. Why we need a Green Paper on Irish unity

The demand for an end of partition and the reunification of Ireland is a demand for national democracy. It is the way forward to political progress and lasting peace; the way to a prosperous and equal nation. There is a democratic, economic and social imperative to create a unified and independent Irish state.

The creation of a united Ireland is the primary political objective of Sinn Féin. We are working to make this a reality in our time. There is an onus on all those who advocate national reunification, especially the Irish Government, to plan and take steps to achieve it.

Sinn Féin believes that the practical planning for a united Ireland begins now. Three years ago the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis unanimously endorsed a resolution, calling on the Irish Government to bring forward a Green Paper on Irish unity.

We have consistently urged an island-wide approach in key policy areas, including the economy, health, education, employment, agriculture, culture and the arts and tourism. We have given practical expression to this through the work of our ministers in the Executive and the all-Ireland Ministerial Council established under the Good Friday Agreement. In the Assembly and in Leinster House and in Europe, Sinn Féin representatives have continuously pressed the need to sustain and develop the all-island approach enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement.

And, of course, the full implementation of the Agreement is the primary current demand of democrats and must be the political priority of the Irish



Government. Nationalists and republicans should be strengthening and building upon the all-Ireland aspects of the Agreement. The Irish Government should be initiating and sustaining a planned programme of all-Ireland social, cultural and economic development, to remove the obstacles created by partition, to strengthen the links between people in all parts of the island and, insofar as is possible short of the ending of partition, to integrate the economy and society across the island.

Sinn Féin is urging the preparation and publication of a Green Paper on Irish Unity by the Irish Government. The Green Paper should identify the steps required to promote and subsequently ensure a successful transition to the reunification of Ireland.

The Irish Government must clearly be among the principal persuaders for Irish unity.

There is an onus on the Government to promote, popularise and seek support for this; to persuade the British Government to become persuaders for

a united Ireland, and to engage with unionists at all levels of society towards this end.

### **The status quo is not an option**

We are almost 12 years on from the public emergence of the Irish Peace Process in the first joint statement by Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams and the then SDLP leader, John Hume, in April 1993. However, the only strand of that process still existing at this time is the IRA cessation of military activities. There is no political process, no dialogue, no negotiation.

Instead a dangerous political vacuum has opened up. The failed politics and rhetoric of the long era of conflict are once again dominating the political agenda. The failed rhetoric of exclusion, vilification and criminalisation hold centre stage like the spectre of the failed status quo which gave us conflict in every generation for more than two centuries.

The status quo is not acceptable; it is not an option. Stalemate is not acceptable; it is not an option.

Before the Good Friday Agreement, the Six County state was an undemocratic and failed political entity, and after the Good Friday Agreement it remains so. The substance of the Good Friday Agreement makes that clear. Its special requirements for power-sharing in the Executive, the checks and balances in the Assembly and the need for statutory provision to adhere to these requirements make all of that clear. Add to this the equality requirements to combat structural and generational discrimination and the picture becomes clearer. The interlocking nature of the political institutions including their all-Ireland structures and the provisions on policing and justice make clear beyond doubt how

unacceptable the status quo of partition and the Six Counties statelet is. For nowhere else on these islands can such distinctive arrangements be found. Nowhere else are such measures required: special measures to address a politically abnormal and unacceptable situation in which the potential for conflict is endemic.

The constructive and positive options which challenge us all are:

- We go forward with the speedy and full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement or, in the event that the unionist party leaderships adhere to their opposition to this.
- The governments must implement all those elements of the Agreement that are under their control.

The Good Friday Agreement has been described as an agreement to a journey but not to a destination. Insofar as the constitutional questions/the national question is concerned, this could be held to be accurate; that is, work in progress. However, the destination in respect of equality in all its dimensions – human rights; acceptable, accountable and representative policing; a fair and effective legal and judicial system; the destination is clear, unequivocal and

indispensable. There are no 'ifs', ands or 'buts' about it. Nor is there any question about the all-Ireland architecture of the political institutions agreed.

With or without the Agreement there is a responsibility on both governments to ensure these issues are speedily dealt with.

Sinn Féin is clear about journey's end. We seek a representative democracy in a politically independent and re-united Ireland. This is the public position too of Fianna Fáil and the SDLP.

The peace process evolved out of discussions between Gerry Adams, John Hume and the then Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, about national and democratic interests, including peace. The nationalist consensus created at that time – boosted by the IRA cessation of 31 August 1994 – set the peace process in motion. It has been derailed.

The causes of conflict in Ireland arise from British policy in Ireland. Joint action by the Irish and British governments is both desirable and preferable but action by the Irish Government should not be wholly dependent upon action by the British administration.

This discussion paper calls on the Irish Government to re-build the peace process and as part of this to commission a Green Paper on Irish unity which unites democrats, domestically and internationally behind a plan for national democracy and permanent peace in Ireland.





## 2. The democratic and political imperative for Irish unity

There are democratic and political imperatives for the unification of Ireland. The division of our island and our people has had lasting damaging consequences for all aspects of national life. We cannot fulfil our potential as a people without removing that division. British policy in Ireland has fractured Ireland's essential national unity.

When Sinn Féin speaks of Irish unity we mean more than the removal of partition; we mean, also, the unity of the people of Ireland. We seek a process of national reconciliation. The democratic tradition in Ireland embraces people regardless of religious backgrounds. That is the well-spring of the political demand for Irish unity and independence, from the United Irish movement of the 1790s up to the present day.

Irish unity does not just mean mere territorial unity. Ireland was united under British rule up to 1920, but political independence and the sovereignty of the people were denied. The British Government should address this democratic imperative by becoming persuaders for Irish unity and by developing policies to end partition and end its jurisdiction in Ireland.

Of course, there is still today a majority within the Six Counties in favour of retaining the union with Britain. The duty of democrats in Ireland is to persuade a sufficient number of those in the North who are at present in favour of the union that the best outcome for the constitutional and political future is a united Ireland. One of the ways we can do that is by setting out how we see Irish unity coming about and the type of society we envisage in a united country.

When British jurisdiction was dismantled in 26 Irish counties, maintaining the union became the basis for the creation of a sectarian, gerrymandered, undemocratic state in the Six Counties.

The majority for the union, and therefore the statelet itself, could only be maintained by systematic discrimination - political, religious, economic and cultural - against the contrived nationalist minority. A vicious cycle was created. Unionist political leaders convinced their followers that they were the beneficiaries from the establishment of the 'Northern Ireland' state. The leaders of unionism worked actively against any co-operation between Protestants and Catholics on social and economic issues lest this threaten the unionist political monolith.

The political, economic and social conditions, which gave rise to all this have changed greatly but the legacy of partition as an obstacle to national democracy, unity and reconciliation remains.

In the Six Counties progress has been made but full equality and full civil and human rights have not yet arrived.

Moreover, encouraged by the stance of the two governments, unionist resistance to equality has grown apace with resistance to the Good Friday Agreement itself. The pillars of the state – the police, the judiciary, the policy formulation and implementation levels of the civil service – are still unionist dominated. They are also deeply integrated with the British state security system dominated by the Northern Ireland Office which includes the repressive presence of the British Army throughout the Six Counties.

But there has been change and the unionist political leadership is no longer able to deliver, as it once could, the fruits of discrimination to all strata of unionism. Manufacturing industries which once were the sites of unionist privilege in employment have declined or disappeared. The most economically disadvantaged unionist communities are often as marginalised (in some cases more so) than their nationalist counterparts. At the same time, the legacy of discrimination remains in the persistent 2 to 1 disparity in rates of unemployment among Catholic men and Protestant men.

The injection by both governments of a substantial peace dividend would transform the situation radically. At a stroke it would generate a momentum for progress that those resistant to

change could not withstand. It would open the door to immediate advancement of the equality agenda which is central to the realisation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Central to the Good Friday Agreement is an equality agenda, which seeks to address many of these injustices. Equality will benefit all sections of the community.

The application of the equality agenda of the Good Friday Agreement to social and economic matters opens a deeply liberating potential in all communities. Cultural domination, discrimination or exclusivity is no part of that. The rich cultural and historic heritage of Ireland, its languages and traditions in our communities, the cultural revival of Ireland as a whole during the last century, should be a shared and inclusive heritage. Diverse cultures must be recognised and incorporated in an all-inclusive multicultural society on this island.

Some in the unionist community already privately believe that Irish unity is inevitable. The equality agenda protects and supports all communities. Ownership through participation in the process of change is the best guarantee that their interests will be represented most effectively.



Nationalists throughout Ireland also need to come to terms with the reality that the achievement of the national and democratic aim of Irish reunification will mean profound change. The political landscape will be transformed. New political alignments will evolve. A new multi-cultural society, embracing and respecting all traditions, must emerge. New island-wide economics will develop. There will be new demands on the economy to meet the needs of a reunited island and people. There will be many challenges but also many opportunities.

Part of this opportunity will lie in discovering and exploiting the great potential for economic growth and development that an all-Ireland economy offers. The separation of two economies, duplication of services, competing strategies and two currencies have all negatively impacted on the economy. We believe that a unified, all-Ireland economy holds out substantial potential for sustainable economic growth across the island through the development and co-ordination of economic planning on an all-Ireland basis. Strengthened economic growth is something which we all desire and it is a persuasive argument in support of Irish unity.

These opportunities, which are endorsed by the Good Friday Agreement in the commitments made under the Common Chapter, should be developed now.





### **3. A strategy for Irish unity**

National independence is the best guarantee of democracy, equality and peace. British policy in Ireland has been the antitheses of this. Its premise is violence and the threat of violence, and political conditions which gave rise to both. Conflict and division in Ireland have been the consequences of this.

There is a political onus and national responsibility on the Irish Government to formulate and implement a strategy to promote and achieve the national and democratic objectives of:

- National self-determination
- Irish territorial reunification
- Political independence
- Sovereignty, and
- National reconciliation

This would involve a wholly peaceful and democratic process to achieve these ends.

Consultation, engagement, persuasion and negotiation with a view to securing active support for a united Ireland must be the means towards these ends. By definition, this must involve all of the people of this island and their political representatives, the churches, civic society and the voluntary sector.

It must involve a negotiation with the British Government.

It must be underpinned by a meaningful and substantial peace dividend from both governments.

Such a strategy needs to have an international dimension which includes seeking specific forms of support from:-

- Popular and political opinion in Britain;
- The Irish diaspora in Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, Europe and elsewhere;
- The international community and especially the European Union, the USA and former colonies whose success in respect of securing political independence we seek to emulate.

## **A Green Paper on Irish unity**

The Taoiseach should commission a Green Paper on Irish unity to be completed within one year.

This should address all aspects of this national and democratic project including its political, social, economic, cultural, legal, administrative and international dimensions.

The aim should be to identify steps and measures which can promote and assist a successful transition to a united Ireland and to develop detailed planning for a new state and a new society that all Irish people can share. All stakeholders in society on this island must be given an opportunity to take ownership of the debate and the process this initiates.

The Green Paper should be referred to a specially dedicated Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on Irish Unity to monitor, assess and report progress on implementation.

A Minister of State should be appointed by the Irish Government with the dedicated and specific responsibility of driving forward and developing policy options and strategies to advance the outcomes of the Green Paper and to direct and co-ordinate the Government's all-Ireland policies.

These measures should include:-

- Unifying national and democratic opinion, domestically and internationally behind a plan for Irish unity;
- Persuading unionists of the merits of unity;
- Challenging British policy in Ireland.

Specific provision should be made to maximise participation by Irish citizens resident in the North in the democratic life of the nation including:-

- Pending the re-integration of the social, political and economic systems of the two existing jurisdiction, the existing 18 Westminster MPs should automatically be accorded membership of the Dáil, with

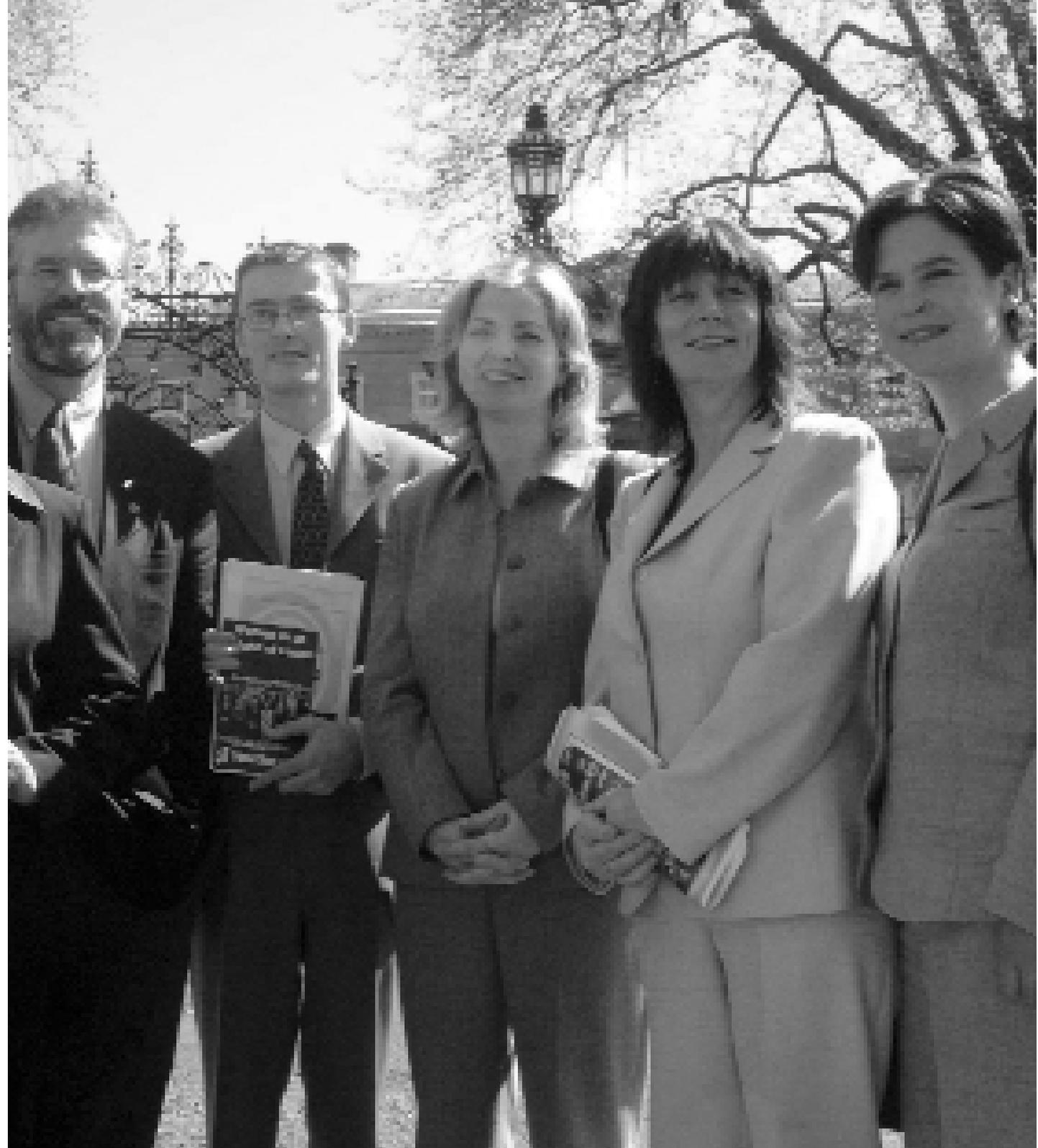
consultative and speaking rights.

- A determined number of seats should be allocated to Six-County parties in proportion to their electoral representation.
- The Oireachtas should open the door to those of the unionist tradition who may, in the future, wish to avail of representation. Unionist seats should be left vacant as a constant assertion of the recognition of the Irish nation that they have right of entitlement in national institutions.
- The list system for direct election to the Seanad should be truly national and citizens in the Six Counties should have the vote.
- Voting rights in presidential elections should be extended to citizens in the Six Counties, beginning with the next such elections.

A representative forum - 'A Caucus of the Irish Diaspora' - should be created to promote national and democratic interests internationally and to give immigrants and their descendants an ownership role in the pursuit of an Irish national democracy.

Economic planning for Irish unity must be a key part of this process. The Government, in consultation with the social partners and other stakeholders, must begin the process of co-ordinating economic planning on an all-Ireland

basis. Practical measures would include all-Ireland common currency, tax and spending policies and economic development agencies and market regulators - energy, telecommunications and transport - coming together on an all-Ireland basis.







## 4. The Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement was democratically endorsed in referendums, North and South, in 1998. There is a democratic imperative on the two governments to implement the Agreement. The full implementation of the Agreement is the primary demand of democrats now.

At this time, however, it appears that the two governments have given in to the opposition of Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to the Agreement. Anti-Agreement forces have set the political agenda.

Sinn Féin is calling for the two governments to take up their responsibilities for implementation of the Agreement. We are ready to play our full part in the collective responsibility for this and develop the peace process to its desired conclusion. Sinn Féin will be pressing the two governments on the following issues.

### **All-Ireland Ministerial Council**

The Good Friday Agreement created the all-Ireland Ministerial Council and set out areas for all-Ireland development where ministers, North and South, would work in co-operation in education, health, environment, agriculture, transport and tourism. It also set up "implementation bodies" with executive functions to implement all-Ireland policies on aspects of Language, Intertrade, Food Safety, Ireland's Waterways and Tourism. In each of these areas, progress and programmes of work are being advanced through the implementation bodies.

Even at this embryonic stage, the potential is obvious and it is clear that all-Ireland developments can bring about considerable benefits to all of us living on the island.

- The All-Ireland Ministerial Council should have its remit developed and expanded.
- Sinn Féin is calling for new areas of ministerial co-operation including Community Development, Art and Heritage, Economic Co-operation and Public Investment.
- Dáil procedures should be amended to facilitate direct reporting of the progress of the All-Ireland Ministerial Council.
- We are also calling for the remit of the six existing all-Ireland implementation bodies to be expanded and for the creation of further implementation bodies (e.g. Policing, Justice, Agriculture, Rural Development, Social Economy, Pollution Control, Mental Health, Further and Higher Education, Communications Infrastructure and Energy).
- A Minister of State in the Irish Government should be appointed with specific responsibility for driving forward and co-ordinating the work of the all-Ireland institutions and implementation bodies.

### **All-Ireland Charter of Fundamental Rights**

The Agreement includes a provision to develop an all-Ireland Charter of Fundamental Rights. Under such a Charter, all-Ireland governance would be subject to a legally enforceable rights-based framework. The Charter presents an opportunity to draw on European and international experience to ensure that we have robust human rights protections for the island as a whole.

### **All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum**

There is also provision for an all-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum whereby those who have been excluded have a voice to impact on governance. A meaningful all-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum would offer local communities, trades unions, voluntary groups, women's and youth organisations and local businesses an opportunity to become involved in decision-making on an all-Ireland scale. The Forum would be a platform for the vindication of rights.

### **All-Ireland Inter-Parliamentary Forum**

The development of the all-Ireland economy, spatial integration, social networking and human rights harmonisation is already underway. The establishment of an all-Ireland Inter-Parliamentary Forum, as set out in Strand Two of the Good Friday Agreement, has the potential to act as strategic conduit between Leinster House and the Assembly. It can be key to refining and focusing integrated policy development, promoting initiatives that will facilitate the development of a robust all-Ireland economy, interfacing with the all-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum and other all-Ireland institutions, promoting an inclusive and dynamic civil society and regulating all-Ireland policy development to ensure that it complies with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

### **Equality Commission and Equality Authority**

In the Six Counties, the Agreement made provision for an Equality Commission and Equality Impact Assessments through Section 75 Equality Duty - whereby all legislation would be rigorously equality-proofed. Targeting Social Need provisions

and anti-discrimination charters have to be drawn up and enforced by all government and statutory agencies. This anti-discrimination legislation is mirrored by the Equality Authority and equality provisions in the 26 Counties. There is a need to widen the grounds of discrimination to include the socially and economically disadvantaged, trades union membership and ex-prisoners.

### **Building a community for reunification**

But, all-Ireland development goes beyond the provisions of the Agreement and the structures it

established. It encompasses other constituencies and groups such as the European Union, local government, the trades union movement, business, NGOs and advocate groups, community partnerships and other sections of civic society and their common concerns. Common concerns are increasingly addressed in an all-Ireland context.

The Irish Government and those political parties advocating Irish unity need to build a 'community for reunification' and develop strategies that look beyond North-South cross-border co-operation as

an end in itself but rather as a means to an end that is to evolve into joined-up practice that actually delivers.

