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*John
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The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland Alliance

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“ P R E S S R E L E A S E ”

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NOT FOR BROADCAST/PUBLICATION BEFORE 10.30AM, FRIDAY 17/5.

Alliance Launch Manifesto

The Alliance party has said that if the people of Northern Ireland want a fair and realistic settlement then they must vote for it. Launching the party's manifesto today, Party Leader Dr John Alderdice said:

“Over the past number of years, Alliance has worked relentlessly at home, in London, Dublin and Washington to try and bring an equitable settlement that can accommodate **all** our people. We are now reaching the most important stage in the process - hammering out a deal at the All-party Talks. This is not going to be easy - and all parties must enter the negotiations willing, and indeed determined, to make the compromises which will be needed if we are to reach an honourable and lasting settlement.

“Given the positions of the Unionist and Nationalist parties, this will not be easy and if the people of Northern Ireland vote in strength for the set positions of Unionism and Nationalism, the talks will start from a position of polarisation. If, on the other hand, the people strengthen the Alliance mandate, then the talks will start with a momentum towards agreement and the prospects for an honourable settlement and the building of the peace will be immeasurably improved.

“The people have a right to know where the parties stand on two key issues - the process of the talks, and the nature and content of the settlement.

MORE

Process

"As far as the peace process is concerned, Alliance is committed to inclusive talks. We want all parties at the table, and we have shown our preparedness to talk to all the parties in a way that few others have done. The Talks must however proceed on the internationally accepted principles of democracy set out in the Mitchell Report - no violence, no vetoes, and no sacrifice of principle. The Mitchell principles threaten no-one and should be readily accepted by everyone. Decommissioning of weapons, and dialogue leading to a political settlement are **both** necessary, and **neither** should be made into an obstacle to the achievement of the other.

"Much has been made of the peace process, but the voters also have the right to know **what kind** of settlement they are voting for.

Content

"Alliance is committed to a power sharing regional government for NI, to a Bill of Rights that will protect every individual and prevent discrimination, to constructive, accountable North-South co-operation, and to the principle of consent which ensures that the future of Northern Ireland is determined by the people - **all** the people who live here."

NOTES

The Alliance is running sixty candidates in all eighteen constituencies. These include some Alliance stalwarts such as John Alderdice in East Belfast, Seamus Close in Lagan Valley and Oliver Napier in North Down and some relative newcomers such as Ann Gormley, the Chairman of Omagh District Council, in West Tyrone and Julian Crozier, the former head of the Training and Employment Agency, in South Down. Following a democratic vote at party council the party has ensured that Alliance's two top-up places will go to Women candidates.

A full copy of the manifesto and briefing can be obtained from Paul Mc Erlean (01232 324274 or 0468 151972, [0044 468 151972 from outside UK]).

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