

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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Hope and optimism must be mixed with realism - Alderdice

Alliance Leader Lord Alderdice, speaking at today's meeting of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin Castle has issued challenges to participants to face the realities of the Talks Process.

Lord Alderdice said:

"I welcome the increasing network of contacts which is part of the process of inclusivity necessary to build the peace which delegates here have been seeking since the Forum's original inception. I therefore hope that not only will Unionists find their way to a future meeting of this Forum but also that Sinn Féin and the SDLP will join the Forum in Belfast so that all strands of opinion in Northern Ireland will have a meeting place.

"I share the hope and optimism which has been expressed by delegates this morning but there is also a need for realism. There will have to be changes to the Irish Constitution to remove the claim of jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. It is in any case a political rather than a legal claim. After all, the Irish Government has never tried to prosecute it through the International Court of Justice, for it has no proper legal basis in International Law. In return there will need to be North - South arrangements for both practical and political reasons. But let us be realistic. They will not have Executive powers. They may have Executive functions, but there will

not be an incipient All Ireland Governmental arrangement. What is possible is an Inter Governmental Conference like the European Council of Ministers or the Anglo-Irish Inter Governmental Conference, but this is an expression of democratically accountable Executive functions, not simple Executive power."

Lord Alderdice also challenged Sinn Fein to assist the International Body on Decommissioning by undertaking to put them in touch with those in the Republican Movement who have access to the weapons stocks.

He went on to suggest to the Irish Government that there was now a prospect of the creation of an island wide framework for Human Rights, by following the British Incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights. "The Republic will soon be the only signatory in Western Europe not to have incorporated the convention", he said.

Concluding his remarks John Alderdice said "The aim of the Talks and of all of us is to try to build a community where everyone can feel at home in their own place, and I am increasingly optimistic that we can succeed".

For further information contact Lord Alderdice on 0385 267496(mobile) or our Press Officer Richard Good on 0385 598452.