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## **NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION POSITION PAPER**

The greatest success of the Good Friday process was its ability to reach agreement between the majority of parties in Northern Ireland on a cross-party basis and the fact that it went on to gain widespread support in the referendum both North and South of the border. The greatest failure of the Good Friday Agreement was the lack of an inclusive process to galvanise pro-agreement energy to bring about the implementation of the Agreement.

The theory, it seems, was that the Assembly and/or the Executive would take over the implementation of all those aspects of the Agreement within its competence and the remaining 'reserved matters' would be dealt with by the British Government or the British and Irish Governments working together.

The problem with this piece-meal approach is that the Assembly is only one part of the Agreement and only deals with certain aspects of it. Other issues, including those which are the most contentious such as policing, decommissioning, normalisation, criminal justice, Human Rights and Equality, do not directly fall within the remit of the Assembly or the Executive.

This fragmentation of the out-workings of the Agreement has led to a fragmentation of the responsibilities of those working the Agreement and ultimately a fragmentation of the parties to the Agreement, including those inside and those outside the Executive. The result is an almost total lack of communication between the pro-agreement parties on the most contentious issues. In other words, a total failure to address the major causes of division between the parties.

The only time the parties are brought together to confront these issues is during a crisis, when they are forced by the British and Irish Governments to 'lock horns'. Even then, the process is fragmented within the Executive and between the main Executive and the non-Executive parties because it is confined to Ulster Unionist and Sinn Fein. The result is a process doomed to failure because it lacks the very essence of the Good Friday Agreement – inclusion.

The following proposal from the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition attempts to outline a long-term strategy which governs all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement, and includes all those that are signatories to that Agreement with provision to accommodate those parties which are not signatories to the agreement in those areas where they have an involvement.