

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

Possible Programme of Work

1. What follows is a preliminary, indicative list of topics which the Forum might choose to examine. It draws upon suggestions made by speakers at the Forum's inaugural meeting on 28 October.
2. Debate among members of the Forum will evidently be of primary importance in shaping the outcome of its deliberations. However, this process could be supplemented in a number of areas by the preparation of sectoral reports (drafted either by the Secretariat or by outside consultants, or by both collaboratively), and will also be enriched by public submissions.

Possible Topics

3. (a) Barriers to Peace and Reconciliation

It might be useful for the Forum, in the light of its own discussions and of public submissions, to prepare a summary report identifying perceptions of all the primary barriers which exist to peace and reconciliation, including, for example, the effects of violence upon its victims. Separately, some issues could be examined more critically and in greater depth.

- (b) Relationships within Northern Ireland

The Forum might in particular seek to analyse the principles of parity of esteem and equality of opportunity and treatment, and their practical implications. The treatment of identity and its expression would be an important aspect of this area of work.

- (c) Tackling Economic and Social Disadvantage

While there is already (in bodies such as the National Economic and Social Forum) a continuing and wide-ranging debate, both North and South, on these issues, the Forum could usefully concentrate on those aspects directly related to the legacy of conflict - eg social and economic reconstruction initiatives. It could examine the scope offered by peace for new approaches and for maximising the impact of international support from the EU, US, the Irish "diaspora", and other possible sources. The Forum might also consider the impact of peace upon

the economies of both parts of the island, including upon employment.

(d) North/South Cooperation

The Forum might examine those areas of economic, social and cultural activity offering the greatest scope for concerted partnership approaches between North and South, including in relation to the challenges and opportunities of European Union. The Forum might also study the possibilities for enhanced cross-border co-operation at local or regional level.

(e) Policing and Justice Issues

The Forum could explore how best to build cross-community confidence in civilian policing and the rule of law in Northern Ireland.

(f) Security Matters

The Forum might consider the ways and means of bringing about all-round demilitarisation and a non-violent society.

(g) Constitutional Issues and Political Structures: Realities and Requirements for a Stable and Comprehensive Settlement

While the Forum is not a negotiating body, it could usefully examine the realities which would need to be taken into account across the full range of relationships in framing a settlement; on what, consequently, would be required of such a settlement; and on the principles which would underpin it.

(h) Obstacles in the South to Relationships of Trust

In line with the commitments made by the Taoiseach in paragraph 6 of the Joint Declaration, the Forum might consider ways to remove any elements in the democratic life and organisation of the Irish State which could be represented as a real and substantial threat to the Unionist way of life and ethos, or that can be represented as not being fully consistent with a modern democratic and pluralist society.

(i) Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

The Forum might identify those rights and freedoms, both individual and communal, which need to be permanently protected by fundamental law either within the two parts of the island separately or in any new political/constitutional framework which could conceivably arise in future. The Forum might also consider appropriate models (e.g., a Bill of Rights) for such fundamental law.

Forum Secretariat
3 November 1994

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