

FORUM FOR PEACE
AND RECONCILIATION



FÓRAM UM SHÍOCHÁIN
AGUS ATHMHUINTEARAS

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Peace Forum to do more of its work in Public Sessions

The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation has announced that, during the next three months, most of its meetings will be open to the public. The Forum's programme of work until mid-May allows time for all the themes identified by the delegations in their initial presentations to the Forum to be debated in greater detail. These include Parity of Esteem, Obstacles in the South to Reconciliation, Constitutional and Political Structures, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, North-South Co-operation and Policing and Justice issues. A copy of the schedule of meetings for the next three months is included with this release.

Reviewing the Forum's first three months, its Chairperson, Judge Catherine McGuinness, said that "our debates have highlighted the benefit of talking and the value of teasing out ideas between political Parties". Judge McGuinness said that she hoped the decision to hold more public sessions would help promote a better understanding of the Forum's work. "If those who are reluctant to participate are able to hear what the Parties have to say at the Forum, I believe that they will find it far less threatening than they may imagine". The Forum, she added, "provides an opportunity for often divergent points of view to be put forward and has, I believe, been a useful learning process for all involved".

Judge McGuinness said that, starting with this week's meeting, the Forum would be setting aside several sessions to hear oral submissions from individuals and groups. This is being done to provide an opportunity to consider the many new and innovative suggestions made in response to the Forum's call for public submissions.

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