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SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY

Rights and Safeguards

Strand 2: Agenda Item 5

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Submission to Strand 2 Agenda: Agenda Item 5

1. To ensure confidence in new North-South institutions and to enhance respect for human, civil, political and cultural rights it is essential that adequate safeguards for such rights are associated with these institutions in a manner which complements safeguards to be determined in the other strands.
2. The suggestion in the New Framework for an Agreement that a Covenant or Charter to enshrine and support such rights, is one that the SDLP endorses and one which should be part of a new settlement.
3. The existence of an extensive body of internationally agreed individual and communal rights provides the basis and guidelines for such a Covenant or Charter. In the course of the current negotiations relevant international rights covenants and charters should be reviewed in order to determine their particular relevance to the Irish context.
4. In addition to agreeing the actual body of rights to be endorsed, mechanisms which will foster, monitor and ensure implementation and enforcement of such rights throughout the island will also require examination and agreement.
5. At a political level a commitment to the principle of consent as it would apply to any change in the status of Northern Ireland and as set out in the Joint Declaration could also find expression in a Covenant or Charter.
6. Drawing on the Principles of Democracy and Non-Violence contained in the Report of the International Body, such a Covenant should also enshrine a solemn commitment to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues.