

Ideas for consideration at Think Tank meeting

We sent out 'initial' responses to the Prime Ministers' Statements and the IRA statement on Saturday. We need a more 'considered' and more detailed response to present to the press in the coming days (this week or next week). I suggest we organise a press conference in Stormont attended by Think Tank Members and others from the Executive. At that conference we set out our position on the statements and on the way forward. I have prepared a draft of the type of statement we should consider for release. It would be useful if we could agree a statement and a date for the presser.

DRAFT

NIWC CALLS ON PRO-AGREEMENT PARTIES TO STAND TOGETHER

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has called on all pro-Agreement parties to stand together in support of the restoration of power to Northern Ireland on May 22. In a detailed response to the progress made over the past week, the NIWC welcomed what it described as a clear demonstration of the willingness of all sides to resolve their differences and work together for the common good.

Calling for a round table meeting of all pro-Agreement parties, the Coalition said parties should avoid the mistakes of the past. Regular contacts should take place with pro-Agreement Parties to monitor the implementation of all aspects the Agreement, they said, and the Civic Forum should be set up as soon as power is devolved to allow this project to be jointly managed by the wider community as well as the politicians.

Speaking at a press conference on May, South Belfast Assembly Member Monica McWilliams said she believed the IRA statement and the response by the security forces were the most positive steps towards lasting peace since Good Friday 1998.

"I welcome the IRA statement as a positive and significant demonstration of their commitment to the peace process", she said. "The acceptance by the IRA that Republicans and Unionists have equal right to pursue their political objectives by peaceful means represents an important step in the decommissioning of mind-sets which this process has always required. The clouds of ambiguity which have dogged progress for two years are slowly lifting and we believe the way is clear for the pro-agreement project to move full throttle forward".

North Down Assembly Member, Jane Morrice warned that the pro-Agreement parties should avoid making the mistakes they made in the past. Calling for a round table meeting of the pro-Agreement parties, she said

"Now more than ever, the pro-Agreement project must be a collective and inclusive venture. We must stand shoulder to shoulder in support of the Agreement and we should not allow our ranks to be weakened by those who would bring the Agreement down. Once the Executive is up and running, we should continue to meet to ensure the full implementation of every aspect of the Agreement. We must also galvanise support for the Agreement in the community by setting up the Civic Forum as soon as possible to ensure ownership of this process by the public at large".