

Liaison Sub-Committee on Confidence Building

Building confidence and trust is crucial in any peace process. All the participants have a responsibility in this. This Liaison Sub-Committee, comprising representatives of all the participants provides a mechanism to assist that.

At this juncture, however, the major responsibility rests with the British Government. They are the de facto sovereign authority with the day-to-day responsibility for overcoming the discrimination and inequality left by previous British governments. They are also participants.

Issues of equality and justice are basic civil and human rights. They are not matters for negotiation. This is a British government responsibility.

The discussion of confidence building measures whether in this Liaison Sub-Committee or in the Strands in no way overrides, delays or can be a substitute for British government responsibility for speedily tackling the agenda for change which is vital to the building of confidence. In many cases such action may merely require the implementation of existing British government policy. In other cases it will require going far beyond this in terms of policy, legislation and other measures.

Parallel to and separate from the ongoing responsibility of the British government as the de facto power, we have the responsibility placed on all of the participants to ensure that a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiations is taking place and to assist in the creation of an atmosphere of confidence and trust.

The role of this Liaison Sub-Committee is in relation to specific issues which might contribute to the building of confidence in the process as a whole. We note that the International Body made some suggestions in this regard.

We also note that in its report the International Body said: "In the course of our discussions, many urged that certain actions other than decommissioning be taken to build confidence. We make no recommendations on them since they are outside our remit, but we believe it appropriate to comment on **some** (our emphasis) since success in the peace process cannot be achieved solely by reference to the decommissioning of arms."

The International Body makes clear mention in the report that these issues are only some of the matters raised with them. It is in this context that we need to view the ambiguity of the procedural motion of 24 September. If the International Body in its report clearly leaves the door open with regard to the issues raised the procedural motion should not be interpreted as closing that door.

The Rules of Procedure are unambiguous in this respect. Rules 17 and 18 respectively make clear that a participant will be free to raise "any

significant issue of concern" and "any other matter which it considers relevant" in any of the formats.

Participants, therefore will be able to raise any issue in this Liaison Sub-Committee which they feel would contribute to the building of confidence.

In Sinn Féin's view, these issues would include:

- Those issues which fall into the equality and democratic rights agenda and which address political, economic, social and cultural discriminations.

These include:

- Equality of opportunity in employment
 - Equality of treatment for the Irish culture and identity
 - Equality of treatment of elected representatives
 - Equality in the provision of education, specifically through the medium of Irish
 - Equality of treatment in economic development.
- Those issues which could be described as falling into the demilitarisation agenda, such as:
 - political prisoners
 - emergency legislation
 - policing.
 - Issues or other matters which may arise outside the process of negotiations which are causing ongoing tension or difficulties to creating a climate of confidence.