

**EMBARGO: FRIDAY, 19 MAY, 1995 - 12 NOON**

**SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY**

***NORTH-SOUTH STRUCTURES***

**FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION**

**DUBLIN CASTLE**

**19 MAY, 1995**

4. The fundamental principles which underlie the case for North-South structures can be expressed as follows. First, there is the need to express in institutional form the affinity which people in Northern Ireland, especially those of the nationalist tradition, have with the people in the rest of the island. The principle underlying this need is well expressed in the 'New Ireland Forum Report' (Chapter 4.15) where it refers to the right of the people of the nationalist tradition 'to effective political symbolic and administrative expression of their identity'. This right is balanced by the need which the New Ireland Forum also stressed to recognise the right of the unionist tradition to the expression of its identity. Affinity with the wider community in the rest of Ireland is not confined to the nationalist tradition. Unionists, too, frequently stress their Irishness and are, thereby, also entitled to its expression in North-South structures.
5. Secondly, there is the need to promote co-operation on social, cultural and economic matters between both parts of Ireland. Evidence presented to the Forum from many individuals and groups has revealed the considerable scale of this need as well as a widespread desire and a deep commitment to promote such co-operation. Representatives from all of the major commercial, industrial and agricultural interests North and South as well as those from community and cultural organisations have stressed the need for public representatives to support co-operation. As part of this co-operation a joint approach to matters arising out of our common membership of the European Union has been particularly strongly endorsed. Many submissions have also stressed the need to promote reconciliation, respect and mutual understanding between our different traditions, North and South, in a context of enhanced co-operation. A political voice is essential, therefore, to assist and to promote all aspect of North-South relationships so that equity and balance for all of the areas, sectors and communities involved can be assured.

*Irish  
Dimension*

*Single  
economy  
etc.*



10. The role of North-South structures must be carefully defined in terms of their relationships with the administrations and parliamentary assemblies in Belfast and Dublin as well as with such East-West structures as may be agreed. The SDLP believes that in defining these relationships North-South structures should be characterised, as the 'Frameworks' document states (Part II, paragraph 25) by 'a clear institutional identity' and by a degree of operational autonomy to enable them to function effectively. To this end, support and resources of the kind envisaged in Paragraph 37 of the 'Frameworks' document would be necessary.
11. The functions allocated should be such as would enable those involved in these structures (i) to advise on matters being considered and on decisions to be taken by the administrations in Dublin and Belfast; (ii) to advise on decisions affecting the whole island which are the responsibility of the European Union; (iii) to promote and encourage the harmonisation of services wherever such would be to the mutual benefit of people in both parts of Ireland; (iii) to execute decisions on functions for which such structures would have responsibility.
12. In fulfilling their role the SDLP believes that North-South structures should be characterised by a forward looking and progressive approach to enable them to identify the scope (i) for enhancing co-operation on a wide range of matters such as infrastructural, economic, educational, environmental, energy, health, security, social and cultural development; (ii) for the harmonisation of services wherever it would be in the interest of people in both parts of the country; (iii) for the promotion of reconciliation and respect for all traditions in Ireland; (iv) for the promotion of the whole island's relationships with the European Union; (v) for identifying new functions to be discharged or overseen by these structures.
13. The SDLP is firmly convinced of the need for decision-making within North-South structures to be on a consensual and not on a majoritarian basis. Only such an approach will provide the necessary safeguard that no community represented within these structures would be coerced by a majority.