

Let me make one further point, and this again repeats what I said this morning. The Irish Government is deeply aware of the sincerely held views of the Unionist community on Articles 2 and 3, and we are listening carefully to what is being said to us here by their delegation about these Articles. But Unionist concerns about Articles 2 and 3 are mirrored by the deep significance of these Articles for the identity of the Nationalist community. If we are to reach an honourable agreement, both of these realities must be addressed together or, as Seamus Mallon has put it, what is needed are arrangements to ensure “equality of allegiance”.

I have no illusion about the complexity and the difficulty of meeting the above challenges, including that of finding a balanced constitutional accommodation. But that is the challenge and that is the responsibility that has been given to all of us. The Irish Government will not be found wanting in meeting this challenge and this responsibility.