

NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION

STRAND 1 - NATURE, FORM AND EXTENT OF NEW ARRANGEMENTS

1. The Northern Ireland arrangements should be formulated with a clear understanding that they will be central to proactive North/South co-operation, development and action; proactive regional co-operation, development and action with Scotland, Wales and England; and direct liaison between Northern Ireland and the European Union.
2. The Northern Ireland Political Forum/Assembly should comprise of
 - a) an elected chamber of directly elected politicians;
 - b) a civic chamber composed of business, trade union and voluntary sector interests indirectly elected through electoral colleges.
3. The electoral system chosen should deliver 50/50 gender balanced arrangements in both chambers.
4. Committees and their chairs should be balanced according to political diversity and gender. Committees may include a Business Committee, a Co-ordinating or General Purposes Committee, and other committees according to requirements.
5. In addition there should be a committee dealing with non-transferred matters; a committee charged with co-ordinating North/South matters; a committee to develop arrangements with Scotland and Wales; and a committee to liaise with the European Union.
6. The committee structure should reflect both chambers.
7. A system of co-chairs should be developed.
8. There should be delegated powers to joint North/South bodies consistent with political and financial accountability in each jurisdiction. These bodies should be charged with developing strategic frameworks for economic and social development, joint action on shared natural and physical assets, and implementing EU policy on inter-regional development and harmonisation. These bodies should have decision-making powers based on sufficient consensus.
9. Opportunities for participation in Inter-Governmental arrangements and Anglo-Irish fora should be taken up. Such arrangements should be broadened to take account of regions within the UK and Ireland.
10. There should be compliance with EU and other international obligations and protection for civic, political, social and cultural rights. The two governments should have joint responsibility for citizenship and for protection of individual and collective rights.

11. There should be a transition period of some 4 - 5 years during which the arrangements should be monitored. A report should be published on their operation and their ability to manage further development and change.

12. During the transition period the Political Forum/Assembly should address the further devolution of power to locally based structures which include political representatives and civic interests.

27th October, 1997