

REAFFIRMING THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, ENERGY, THE
ENVIRONMENT AND CYBER

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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REAFFIRMING THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT,
AND CYBER,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:06 a.m., via Webex, Hon. William R. Keating (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. KEATING. The House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee will come to order. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any point; and all members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous material, and questions for the record, subject to the length and limitations of the rules.

To insert something into the record, please have your staff email the previously mentioned address, or contact full committee staff.

Please, keep your video function on at all times, even when you are not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves, and please remember to mute yourself after you finish speaking.

Consistent with House Res. 965 and the accompanying regulation, staff will only mute members and witnesses when it is appropriate, and they are not under recognition, for the purpose of eliminating background noise.

I see that we have a quorum present, and I will now recognize myself for opening remarks.

Pursuant to notice, we are holding a hearing today entitled “Reaffirming the Good Friday Agreement.” I cannot recall one instance meeting with Irish officials when the sincere gratitude for what they term to us, the indispensable U.S. involvement in the Good Friday Agreement was not expressed. That is why a year and a half ago, I held a meeting before this subcommittee on implications of Brexit for Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement, as well as possible paths forward in implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol.

As we all know, the Northern Ireland Protocol was a key point of controversy within Brexit. This protocol was established in order to ensure that the United Kingdom could exit the European Union’s common market without creating a, quote/unquote, “hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.”

With Brexit now behind us, we are seeing the impacts of the withdrawal play out at shipping ports, in unstocked supermarkets, on the streets of Northern Ireland. The complicated components of the withdrawal agreement, the effects of the COVID–19 pandemic,

and underlying economic instability in the region have converged to create a very difficult environment.

Unfortunately, in the last few weeks, we have also seen a resurgence of violence across Northern Ireland, involving young people, 12 years of age, born more than a decade after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. While this violence may have been sparked in the process of implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol, it is truly rooted in historic divisions.

After a period of relative stability and positive direction following years of peace-building efforts, this recent violence stopped many of us in our tracks, myself included. This is because clashes between groups in Northern Ireland have been incredibly dangerous in the past. Northern Ireland has already mourned the loss of more than 3,500 lives, many of whom were civilians during the violence and chaos, commonly known as The Troubles.

While recent violence has slowed, it has also reminded us that peace in Europe is not something to be taken for granted. It is a status of life that we constantly work toward and build upon. For this reason, I have called this hearing to reflect on, and reaffirm the Good Friday Agreement, and better understand the underlying tensions and the current situation on the ground.

The Good Friday Agreement was signed 23 years ago, on April 10, 1998. To come to this agreement, representatives and activists in Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom, came together to discuss paths forward. The United States played a key role, with former U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, chairing the negotiations. Since then, many of us here in Congress, led by Chairman Richie Neal, have continued to support the progress that has been made under this agreement.

Now, in the face of renewed violence, I have called this hearing, invited founding members of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, a group who played integral roles in the Good Friday Agreement negotiations, and have continued to be at the forefront, advocating for representation and dealing with the past.

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was established in 1996, to ensure representation of women at the Good Friday Agreement negotiations. These women were bound by a common vision as well as values of inclusion, equality, and human rights.

After just a few weeks of incredibly intense political organizing, the Coalition was successful in sending two delegates, including hearing witness Monica McWilliams, to the negotiations. Incorporating both Catholic and Protestant voices, their efforts ensured representation and community engagement in many countries, and including our own.

As we look forward and we look at the strife around the world today, I join many people in pointing to the peace agreement as a means of hope, as a beacon for potential peace throughout the world. As the landmark Women, Peace, and Security Resolution 1325 underscores, when women are involved in peace negotiation, agreements have been proven to be more effective and last longer. And the Good Friday Agreement is no exception to this.

Through the inclusion of diverse voices during the peace-building process, and thanks to the courageous and vital work of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and especially the founding mem-

bers here with us today, the agreement is stronger and more comprehensive, and still serves as a bedrock for peace in Northern Ireland.

We hold this hearing today because of the integral role of the U.S. in the Good Friday Agreement, because it is a U.S. priority, and because we must not just deal with The Troubles of today, but, also, deal with the issues of full implementation going forward. With that said, we will hold this hearing to allow us to better understand the process, the longstanding implications of the Good Friday Agreement in the present day.

With that, I am going to recognize for his opening statement, Representative Brian Fitzpatrick.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Keating. Thank you to our esteemed witnesses today, who were instrumental in ushering peace and stability in Northern Ireland. The United States remains committed to supporting the hard-won progress made in Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement and helping Belfast achieve a prosperous and lasting peace.

Ireland and Northern Ireland hold a dear place for me, and the people of Pennsylvania that I represent, and I know the people that everyone on our committee represents. For me personally, my grandfather migrated from the border region, and my father helped found the Irish-American Cultural Society in my hometown.

The Good Friday Agreement, forged, in part, by individuals in this room, is one of the greatest diplomatic success stories of the 20th century. Violence deescalated, trade and tourism swelled, and the people of Northern Ireland, from different communities, sought out a path to a future that would bring lasting peace. The agreement called for the signers to affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, civil rights, and religious liberties of everyone in the community.

Just as the United States was present to facilitate the negotiations that achieved the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the U.S. Government must continue to push for the agreement's full implementation and the consolidation for peace.

Former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell's role, in brokering the peace talks, established a strong example of what U.S. support and interests can achieve. Toward that end, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the United States can best support efforts in Northern Ireland to foster peace and reconciliation.

I am thrilled that we will hear today from the Honorable Mitchell Reiss, who I hope can expand on the importance of the United States appointing a special envoy to Northern Ireland, a role he once held.

Moreover, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on the remaining threats to peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland. I hope that they will address the drivers of the recent riots and violence that erupted in Northern Ireland earlier this year.

It is especially important to understand to what degree Unionist discontent with the new post-Brexit arrangements drove the violence, when compared to other factors, including frustration caused by COVID-19 lockdowns and poor socioeconomic conditions.

The United States, and the U.S. Congress, must remain committed to sustaining the peace process and generating cross-community engagement and economic opportunity in Northern Ireland.

Moreover, we must work with the U.K. government, the Irish government, and the EU to ensure the trade frictions resulting from the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol are resolved, and that all communities in Northern Ireland can reap the economic benefits of the peace dividend.

I also hope our witnesses will address the enduring threat of parliamentarianism, and how the United States can support efforts to disarm and disband these organizations. We are fortunate today to have two members of the Independent Reporting Commission, which was established to address parliamentarianism in Northern Ireland, to provide their insights on how to eradicate this threat that imperils the legacy of the Good Friday Agreement.

We are experiencing a highly polarizing time on Capitol Hill. There are many things that divide our friends across the aisle from all of us. But when it comes to a commitment to peace to Northern Ireland, Members of both parties can stand completely united.

It is my hope today that Congress can learn from our witnesses how the United States can continue to support the implementation of their peace-making strategies moving forward.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling the hearing today for an issue that is near and dear to my heart. I look forward to the discussion. And I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. I thank the ranking member for his comments, and also for the bipartisan spirit he demonstrated in those, and to really send a signal to everyone, that on the issue of Ireland, that we are together across the aisle.

And I would also like to thank all our witnesses for joining us today. As founding members of the Coalition, you have been on the ground since the days of the negotiations, and have continued to be the forefront of transitional justice, disbanding paramilitary groups, and integrating education and representation into the political structure that is there today.

Your testimony will help us better understand the longstanding impacts of the Good Friday Agreement, and how we can move beyond Brexit, and beyond the pandemic, to ensure stability that lasts for generations to come. As Members of Congress, we continue to support the work you have set out to do, ensuring inclusion, equality, and human rights in Northern Ireland.

Professor Monica McWilliams is an emeritus professor at Ulster University's Transitional Justice Initiative and Commissioner for the Independent Reporting Commission. She is a former Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, former member of the Legislative Assembly of Northern Ireland, co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and a signatory to the Good Friday Agreement.

Ms. Jane Morrice is a member of the Board of Governors at the Integrated Education Fund. She is a Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, former head of the European Commission Office in Northern Ireland, and co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

Ambassador Mitchell Reiss is a Commissioner for the Independent Reporting Commission. He is also a former United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland.

I will now recognize the witnesses for 5 minutes each.

If I could, I would like to ask unanimous consent because Mr. Sires, as a chairman, will be leaving. If I have unanimous consent, I would like to recognize him for a brief statement before he has to leave with his duties as chair of Western Hemisphere.

Mr. Sires, do you have, without objection, any introductory comments?

Mr. SIRES. Well, thank you very much. What I wanted to say is, my first trip, or one of the first trips I ever took from becoming a Congressman, was to Northern Ireland. And for me, being Cuban, when I got there, the whole thing was really an eye-opener for me.

One of the things that was most vivid to me is when we got there, they put us in a bus and took us across this bridge where they had made a temporary basketball court. And I saw kids, both Protestants and Catholics, playing.

As we gathered around talking to the kids, no sooner did we get there, 20 minutes later, the bus driver came over and put us back in the bus and said, Look, we have to leave. I said, we just got here, why? He said, Well, because at 8 o'clock, they close the bridge, and we had to get back to the other side. So that, to me, was like really moving in the sense that there was still so much division.

And my concern now is, do we have anybody that took the steps that Bill Clinton took, or Mitchell took, to try to tamper down the violence, or what is going on there now? And obviously, I have a lot of concern what Brexit is going to do to this peace that was so long in coming that was worked out. So that is what I wanted to say. You know, I am sorry I have to leave, but, you know—

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you. Thank you, Chairman Sires, and thanks for your perspective. And it is one more lesson, and one more example, given your work as chairman, Western Hemisphere, how the example of peace in Northern Ireland still gives hope to so many other parts of the world. Thank you.

I will now recognize the witnesses for 5 minutes each. And, without objection, your prepared written statement will be made part of the record.

Professor McWilliams, you are now recognized for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF MONICA MCWILLIAMS, EMERITUS PROFESSOR, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE, ULSTER UNIVERSITY

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Thank you very much, Chair. And I am delighted to participate in this hearing today. As you just heard, I was a signatory to the Belfast Good Friday Agreement.

And it has not only saved lives over the past 23 years, but it was the basis for us to build future stability on the island of Ireland, north and south, and to build strong relationships between us in Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland, and the U.K., as well as making our connections with the rest of Europe. And it has been an example, a good model of conflict resolution for the rest of the world.

And I would like to put on the record here today my acknowledgement of the consistent expressions of support for the Good Friday Agreement by U.S. political leaders, and you yourselves today, from across the political-aisle, and the attention constantly and consistently paid to the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol and the new Trade and Cooperation Agreement resulting from Brexit.

The next 4 years could prove to be quite difficult and contentious times for us. This year, we have the centenary of the partition of Ireland. We also have the 50th anniversary of internment without trial this year, the 40th anniversary of the Republican hunger strikes this year, the Assembly elections next year, at the very latest. And, indeed, there is the Assembly vote on the Protocol coming in 2024. And the census will be published shortly, which may also determine the demands for a— referendum to be held on Irish unification.— That referendum was, indeed, part of the agreement.

So all of that is lying ahead of us, and this is, potentially, a perfect storm that needs judicious and careful handling, and the continued interest of you in the United States.

First, let me turn to the issue of protecting rights and equality. Many civic society groups and organizations are very concerned at the impact that Brexit is now having on the protection of the rights and equality provisions that were in the Good Friday Agreement, and particularly, the interest that the European Union had in protecting those rights, and the legislation that was included as part of us being in the European Union.

It is little wonder now that we have these concerns, particularly that no breaches of human rights and equality should occur, as they were contributory factors to the long-running conflict that I lived through.

And, so, it is really important that we continue to ensure that Brexit does not affect this, that the current review of the Human Rights Act that is currently being undertaken by the U.K. Government does not affect this, nor, indeed, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement that has, indeed, weakened some labor rights and environmental rights and have raised those concerns.

So, the Bill of Rights that was promised in the Good Friday Agreement is still outstanding. As Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, over 13 years ago, I presented that advice, with my fellow Commissioners, to the U.K. Government, and there it sits on 10 Downing Street ever since.

As a result of the recent negotiations between the parties, they agreed that there should be a Bill of Rights Committee established at the Assembly. And it is good to see all those parties now sitting around the table discussing this much-needed issue, in terms of the future provisions of human rights and equality.

But the agreement did not ask me, nor my fellow Commissioners, to find consensus before we presented that advice on the Bill of Rights, and that remains a continuous concern, that there may not be consensus found at the local level in Northern Ireland. But the U.K. Government still needs to hold up its promise to legislate on the Bill of Rights, particularly at the time that we are now leaving Europe and given the context of Brexit. So that is the first point that I would like to make.

The second is in relation to the issue of inclusion. The Women's Coalition stood on three principles: equality, human rights, and inclusion. And back then, it was mostly political inclusion; but today, we are concerned about the issues of economic and social inclusion.

And perhaps, indeed, the recent disturbances on the street reflect some of that in that many people, particularly many of those in the Unionist community, perceive themselves to have been left behind. And I do think that these perceptions sometimes can become reality. And, therefore, we need a much clearer analysis of the potential positive opportunities for remaining in the EU single market, especially for people who feel that their communities have lost out on investments and jobs and training and education.

It is also good to see, however, the amount of good work that has been invested at the interface levels, at the hot spots in the disadvantaged areas, by youth workers, by community workers, by community leaders and civic leaders. And I observed it myself over the recent month.

And I pay tribute here to the International Fund for Ireland that invested so much in making sure that that the dividends of their work in community development paid off, and, indeed, it did. And I was also pleased to see the church leaders standing together at the interface, showing their solidarity across the religious denominations at a time when it was most needed, and at the height of those disturbances. That is all good for peace.

And, as we know, peace-building involves communication, and it involves the building of trust. And also, there is an initiative called Politics in Action in schools. And today, these young people across Northern Ireland will be watching this particular hearing, and taking an avid interest in the United States' interest and the Members of Congress' interest in Northern Ireland.

All these initiatives with young people are much needed. And, indeed, one of the concerns recently has been that the programs for young people during the summer are closed. And we continue to need diversionary programs to be invested in, and therein lies the good funds of the International Fund for Ireland.

And one of the concerns, of course, recently, was this issue of using social media to gather young people quickly into a riot situation. And so to prevent them from going to prison, or for prosecutions at such a young age, we need to pay careful attention to how we can prevent social media being used in this way, and, indeed, many fake accounts that were opened to just simply call people out onto the streets.

There is a serious issue in relation to identity and, again, it also needs attention. And I address that issue in my statement.

And I finally want to bring attention to some of the points that are still outstanding. The issue of the legacy. There was an agreement called the Stormont House Agreement, and I am aware that my colleague, Mitchell Reiss, will pay more attention to that.

But there is an urgent need for the U.K. Government not to work on a unilateral basis, but to consult and to stop the delay in addressing the needs of victims, which, I have to say, the Women's Coalition actually put a proposal into the peace agreement, because in any conflict situation, the needs of victims must also be addressed.

I am involved in Operation Kenova Governance Board, and, I have to say, it is an excellent example of how investigations can be carried out with legitimacy and with human rights' compliance.

There were some concerns over how policing in the community may have reverted in recent years. I am very happy to say that the Policing Board, that consists of both politicians and lay members, independent lay members, is a model for policing. And it stayed in place and its oversight was much valued during the recent months.

And, finally, the mixed messages that have come from particularly the U.K. Government on Brexit must stop. There are potential positives in this for Northern Ireland, but they have been undermined by those very mixed and occasionally very negative messages.

Finally, the Civic Forum. Civic dialog in Northern Ireland has proved essential to peace-building, and it is much needed. The Civic Forum was shut down. There should in addition be District Council Forums established. The reinsertion of the Civic Forum, as promised in the Agreement, should now be implemented.

So, I would ask that the continuous involvement and interest from the U.S. Congress be maintained in the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, particularly in relation to issues of the Bill of Rights and the legacy, and also, in relation to any expertise or support that you may give us in relation to that work with young people, and, particularly, around how badly social media can be used.

And last, I would strongly urge the appointment of a U.S. Envoy, who proved in the past to be absolutely crucial and key to helping us with our peace process. Given the special circumstances now arising from Brexit, this is a person who is much needed in terms of maintaining the contact on social and economic policies between Brussels, London, Dublin, Belfast and Washington, DC.

Thank you very much for allowing me to participate in the hearing today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McWilliams follows:]

**SUBMISSION TO US HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON EUROPE,
ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT & CYBER.**

**Professor Monica McWilliams (Co-Leader Northern Ireland Women's
Coalition).**

I welcome the opportunity to address the members of this Sub-Committee on Foreign Relations in a discussion of such importance to Northern Ireland and Irish/British relations. As someone who was involved in negotiating the Good Friday Agreement, the peace agreement that we achieved has not only saved many lives but also offers a firm basis for future stability on the island of Ireland, both north and south. It is also an accord that is regarded as important for those involved in peace building in other contested areas of the world. I would like to put on record my acknowledgement of the consistent expressions of support for the Good Friday Agreement by US political leaders from across the political aisle and the attention paid to the implementation of the Northern Ireland-Ireland Protocol and the new Trade and Co-operation Agreement resulting from Brexit.

The US contribution to the peace process in Northern Ireland has been and continues to be crucial. The next four years will be critical for peace building – the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021; the 50th anniversary of Internment without Trial in 2021; the 40th anniversary of the Republican Hunger Strikes in 2021; Assembly Elections in 2022 (at the latest); census results in 2021/2022 which may increase demands for a referendum to be held on whether Northern Ireland should remain in the UK (as mandated by the Agreement); and an Assembly vote on the Northern Ireland-Ireland Protocol in 2024. This is potentially a perfect storm that needs judicious and careful handling.

Protecting Rights and Equality

Many civic society groups and organisations have been extremely concerned by the impact that Brexit is having on the protection of the rights and equality provisions in the Good Friday Agreement given that the European Union, and the legislation therein, has been such a critical support for such rights. The Good Friday Agreement is a basis for ensuring no reoccurrence of the breaches of human rights and equality that were contributory factors to the conflict. Securing guarantees for these rights was, and still is, a cornerstone of the Agreement and is intrinsic to the relative peace that we have enjoyed over the past two decades. Much work has been undertaken by civil society NGOs in Northern Ireland along with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and has helped to ensure – as far as possible – that there will be no diminution of rights as a result of Brexit.

I presented the final advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland to the Secretary of State in 2008, as drafted by my fellow Human Rights Commissioners and myself, but it has been left to stagnate for the past thirteen years despite commitments by the UK government to bring forward legislation at Westminster. The UK Government's lack of commitment to introduce a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland remains an outstanding concern. The New Decade, New Approach Agreement in January 2020 led to the restoration of devolved governance in Northern Ireland and a commitment that there should be a Stormont Assembly Committee on the Bill of Rights. The political parties have now formed this Committee but it remains the case that the Agreement did not require the UK to wait for consensus to be achieved on the contents of a Bill of Rights before proceeding to legislation. Indeed the see saw nature of the Assembly, resulting over the contestation of rights, including the right to an Irish Language Act reflects the absence of consensus on many of these issues. Further concerns are now raised by the UK Government's review of the operation of the Human Rights Act (1998) and the consequences for its adherence, or lack of, to the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Any diminution of these rights is to be viewed as a step backwards.

My successor as the NIHR Chief Commissioner, Les Allamby, recently told the Stormont Committee -

"A Bill of Rights remains an unfinished piece in fully implementing the 1998 Agreement. The need for overarching rights protections that provide safeguards for everyone in Northern Ireland remains one of the essential tools for a durable, peaceful society and are never more important than during times of political or economic uncertainty."

Following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union we are all operating within an increasingly complex framework of international obligations. A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would provide clarity and reassurance for the public on what their rights are and what level of protections they should expect in the future."

The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement contained only weak commitments on labour rights, social protections and environmental standards. The US Government should make clear that it expects to see adherence to these standards with regard to rights in any future trade agreements between the US and the UK.

Community Buy-In to the Good Friday Agreement

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, of which I am a founding member, was a party to the Good Friday Agreement negotiations and adhered to three principles throughout the process - respect for human rights; equality and inclusion. Social and economic inclusion has come back into focus as a result of the recent disturbances. The reality is that Catholic/Nationalist/Republican and Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist single identity areas that were the most economically disadvantaged, and suffered the brunt of the Troubles, have benefitted least from the 'peace dividend'. That is

particularly the perception in loyalist/unionist areas. For this reason, there needs to be a much clearer analysis of the economic opportunities that can be opened up on the basis of Northern Ireland remaining in the EU Single Market, as provided for by the Protocol.

Concerns have been raised more recently about the negative impact of the renewed disturbances on the streets particularly in relation to any future investment in these particular hotspots. The positive side was much less reported. Community activists were able to maintain cross-community contact and defuse potential violence inside these local communities. Youth workers were on the streets engaging with young people and persuading them not to take part in any action that could lead to court prosecutions and prison sentences. There was less of a spotlight on hotspots where disturbances were prevented, which showed the investment in community development had paid off. Groups funded under the International Fund for Ireland's Peace Walls initiative, which receives support from the US Government, continue to work together on an inter-community basis and continue to take preventative measures to minimise disturbances. This is the type of peacebuilding work that needs to be extended since it builds trust through communication. Church leaders from a range of denominations stood together at the interface to symbolise their solidarity following the recent disturbances. Building trust, between the communities as well as at the political level, is the key to sustainable peace.

There is a problem where people – and particularly young people – feel that politics is not delivering for them and where they also feel their identity to be under threat. Awareness needs to be built amongst young people about how important a working democracy is in their lives. In that context, it is important that there are no party political threats to withdraw from the legislative Assembly again. There is an opportunity now to deal with concerns about identity in a more positive and proactive manner. One of the core elements of the Good Friday Agreement was to guarantee the right of people in Northern Ireland to either an Irish identity; a British identity; and/or both. There is also a guarantee that irrespective of any future constitutional changes on the island of Ireland, in response to the will of the majority of people in Northern Ireland that a continuation of a British identity will be guaranteed. Work on what this would mean in practice needs to begin without accelerating further fear and friction within the unionist community.

An aspect of political inclusion that also needs to be considered is how to increase the involvement of civil society in the current discussions. The Good Friday Agreement proposed a way forward through the establishment of a Civic Forum which would act as an advisory body to the Northern Ireland Assembly on social, economic and cultural matters. If this were to be re-instated, it could hold hearings

on sensitive issues such as identity and symbols, as well address the commitment in the Agreement to integrated schooling, mixed housing and other important matters. In addition to re-establishing a Northern Ireland Civic Forum, some thought could also be given to be the initiation of District Civic Forums in each of the District Council areas as a way to enhance inter-community dialogue and understanding, as well as acting as a vehicle for government agencies and local politicians to hear community/civic society views particularly with relation to breaking down the divisiveness that has arisen over Brexit. The proposal in the Agreement to establish a North-South Forum has not been brought forward by the Irish government because of the absence of the Civic Forum in Northern Ireland. Increasing the civic dialogue to involve all these streams is much needed.

Navigating Current Tensions

The importance of long-term investment and consistent momentum in peace building are key to conflict resolution. Vacuums, both in terms of politics and community engagement, are dangerous in volatile circumstances. They allow misinformation, rumour and disinformation to circulate freely. One of the issues currently of concern is the use of fake accounts on social media to spread destabilising rumours and to arrange protests. Young people, particularly during the pandemic when other forms of communication were not as easily accessible, became more susceptible to this phenomenon. Support or strategies to address this issue in a more proactive manner, especially through shared expertise with others who have similar experiences in the USA would be beneficial.

A strategy needs to be put in place and resourced to provide diversionary programmes for marginalised young people over the usual volatile summer period in Northern Ireland along with training and employability opportunities for the longer term. The situation where provision for youth facilities is closed down over the summer needs to be reversed as these are the times when this kind of provision is most needed. A positive note is that the US supported AMBIT programme focusing on youth leadership has had excellent outcomes in terms of resilience strategies to deal with the recent crisis. A programme focusing on women's leadership within these areas is also showing good outcomes for what has become known as Communities in Transition.

Two issues that are feeding in to the current tensions are the very difficult question of how to deal with the legacy of the Troubles and the need to review the effectiveness of community policing (as envisaged in the Patten Report on the Future of Policing in Northern Ireland that was supported by the US Government). The Stormont House Agreement (2014) provided a roadmap on the legacy issue. There are current concerns that the UK Government might introduce a different approach

on a unilateral basis. Given the delay in creating a Legacy process to address Troubles related victims, and not just a UK government focus on protecting the legacy of British army veterans, any major deviation from the Stormont House Agreement has the potential of aggravating community level and party political tensions in Northern Ireland. Operation Kenova, dealing with death investigations into cases where the police and other state actors were involved, is a positive development and has helped to build confidence amongst the victims most affected. It has opened a space on how a legacy process might be developed – one that is seen as acting with legitimacy and is also human rights compliant. As a member of the Kenova Governance Board, I have been encouraged by the independent external reviews of these investigations that have noted how highly they have been rated.

The police reforms introduced as part of the Good Friday Agreement were taken forward by PSNI (Police Service NI). These were a critical aspect of the peace process and regarded as a good model for security sector reform for a society transitioning from conflict to peace. More recently concerns have been raised that the PSNI has reverted from a situation of community policing to a situation where perceptions have arisen of inconsistency in policing approaches and the lack of interface protocols (grounded in past experience and learning) and clear strategic direction. As a result of the work that was invested in policing reforms in the earlier years of the peace process, US political representatives will appreciate how important it is that community confidence and goodwill be maintained – and restored in areas where it has decreased. The police will not resolve the current difficulties alone – it requires an integrated government response and the support of politicians. A positive note is that the Policing Board, incorporating both political and independent/lay members, has continued to work throughout the current crisis to ensure the appropriate oversight is in place.

The mixed messages that have been received from the UK Government on the Brexit-related Northern Ireland-Ireland Protocol and the overall negative messaging have overridden the potential positive aspects of the Protocol. This is feeding into a compilation of grievances that is being expressed in Unionist/Loyalist communities specifically together with the continued reference to a 'border' in the Irish Sea. It is important to disaggregate those elements of the Protocol that are causing genuine difficulties, so that we can identify what elements of these difficulties are technical in nature and what are political and respond to these accordingly. From reports in Northern Ireland, the EU has adopted an overly legalistic interpretation of customs/trade regulations as compared to its working relations with other neighbouring non-Single Market European states. There needs to be intensive work to identify and come to an agreement as to how to deal with these issues in a manner that does not disadvantage either consumers and/or traders/manufacturers in

Northern Ireland. Where responsibility lies with British traders who feel that the Northern Ireland market does not justify the adaptations that are required, then this needs to be made clear.

Arguably there is also need for a more consultative structure – alongside formal structures such as the Northern Ireland Specialised Committee – to feed in views (that will be listened to) in Belfast, Brussels, London and Dublin. There is a strong feeling that all agency has been withdrawn from Northern Ireland as to the impact of the operation of the Protocol and that British Government representation of the EU-UK relationship is less than trustworthy. Representatives from a range of civic society organisations in Northern Ireland are engaged in meetings to work up such proposals.

Summary

- The importance of the US government continuing to push for the Agreement to be fully implemented, to re-iterate its importance and oppose any attempts to cherry-pick or misrepresent what has been agreed to date.
- The US government should argue for the delivery of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the Charter of Rights for the island as proposed in the Agreement to prevent any diminution of rights as a result of changes to the Human Rights Act or resulting from Brexit.
- Ensure a space for civic dialogue, to include the reinsertion of a civic forum, and district council civic forums, to advise on the contested issues of identity and the issues resulting from the UK/Ireland Protocol.
- Make available information and support from US experience with regard to the effective management of cyber networks to mitigate the disinformation and misinformation augmenting the current inter-community tensions.
- Maintain US interest in the development of a process to respond to the legacy of the past, given the stalemate and difficulties experienced.
- The US Government should use its position in any trade negotiations with the UK Government, the Irish Government and the EU to seek resolution of

difficulties being experienced in terms of the rollout of the Northern Ireland-Ireland Protocol.

- The US administration should consider the appointment of a US Envoy to Northern Ireland, given the special circumstances arising from Brexit to act as a contact point on social and economic policies involving Brussels, London, Dublin, Belfast and Washington DC.

Monica McWilliams

May 5th 2021

Mr. KEATING. Professor, thank you very much for your comments, as a signatory and someone that will give us perspective, generational perspective going forward.

I now turn to Ms. Morrice, and you are now recognized for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF JANE MORRICE, MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS, INTEGRATED EDUCATION FUND

Ms. MORRICE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Can I begin by saying thank you, America, for your dedicated commitment to the Good Friday Agreement.

I want to start by setting out my stall. I was born in Belfast. I was a teenager when The Troubles started. And I have been working for peace and stability for decades, particularly through the work of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

I can say that the day of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement was the greatest day in my professional life. The day of the Brexit referendum was, without question, the worst. So if you do not mind, I want to focus on that subject, because that is my area of expertise and experience.

Since Brexit, I have become a relatively rare breed in my country. I am a strong supporter of the European Union and I am from a Unionist community background. And that is why I call myself a European Unionist. Constructive ambiguity I think that is called.

I have been opposed to Brexit since the outset, because I firmly believe that the European Union membership enabled peace in Northern Ireland to happen. And, of course, the role of America was, and still is, vital. But if we are talking at the grassroots of bringing communities together, the European Union PEACE Program was vital to that end.

Saying that, I am actually willing to accept the Protocol as the best of a bad Brexit deal. The problem, obviously, is the majority of Unionists do not think likewise. But I am a firm believer, as Monica well knows, in constructive, creative compromise, and I am going to put four proposals to the committee.

The first is regarding the Protocol, is to lobby for the extension of the Protocol to Scotland. This seems to be a very simple idea to a complex problem. It would mean most of the customs checks would move from the Irish Sea border to the Scottish border with England. Bringing Scotland into the equation would put paid to the Unionist/Loyalist argument that Northern Ireland has been cut adrift from the rest of the U.K., and their British identity has been diluted.

Of course, a lot will depend on the outcome of the Scottish elections tomorrow, but this new, what I am calling Celtic Protocol, could serve as a starting point for an association of Scotland, Ireland, and Northern Ireland, working together in the EU single market, customs union, similar to the Benelux countries, which were actually the founding members of the European Union.

My second proposal is—Monica has mentioned it—for the reinstatement of the Civic Forum. Now, that is a commitment under the Good Friday Agreement that we in the Women's Coalition got in there, and it is vital that it be reinstated. When I say that, I would appreciate Americans lobbying for that.

The Irish Citizens' Assembly have had tremendous success preparing for a referendum on social issues, but a political union isn't prepared to take part in all Ireland civic discussions; so, I think they wouldn't refuse if the Civic Forum was doing that.

Third is the need for better engagement with the south of Ireland, in the south of Ireland with the Unionist community in the north. The Irish decision to keep Erasmus and the European Health Card is a great step forward, but there needs to be more communication on this subject. For example, the availability of someone who wants a hip replacement. It takes 3 years' waiting list in the north, where they can get it in 3 months in the south, and it can be reimbursed by the British National Health Service. People need to know about that. Student exchange also, Erasmus north side would be a very good idea.

My final point—and this is one referring specifically to yourselves—is for greater cooperation between the United States and the European Union to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Now, during the peace process, you, the U.S., took a top-down approach, involving Presidents and the Clintons, in an exceptional effort to bring people together. The role of Senator George Mitchell and the Clintons and the White House Saint Patrick's Day events are but a few examples of U.S. diplomacy and political power at its best.

The EU approach, as I said, was bottom up, through its multi-million-pound PEACE Program, its funds coming together at grassroots organizations on a cross-community, and cross-border basis. And interesting to note, they have agreed to continue this program beyond Brexit.

So, in concluding, I want to dwell on that final point in a little more detail. The Good Friday Agreement brought peace and an end to sectarian violence on our streets, but genuine reconciliation is still a very long way off. That is the area we need to focus on. The Peace Walls, which still separate Catholic and protestant communities, are the most visible example of segregation at its worst.

If the EU and the U.S. would work together to set up a specific us and you—nice name—reconciliation fund to promote community reconciliation, and there, I would focus on something like integrating education, because that I firmly believe—and there are many of us who do—is an important area for young people to rub shoulders together and learn from each other and each other's cultures.

Integrated education is the way forward, but also mixed housing, support for victims, shared understanding. And, of course, one of the big roles for yourselves is investment in what could be a peaceful, prosperous, brilliant Northern Ireland.

So they say that it takes 30 years. If it takes 30 years to make war, it takes the same time, 30 years, to make peace. And if that is the case, at the 30th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in 2028, Northern Ireland could really become one of the greatest examples of rare conflict resolution in the world, and a place where everyone wants to do business, because it will be open to the world.

Thank you very much. I will stop there.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Morrice follows:]

Statement to the United States House Foreign Affairs Sub Committee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber

Jane Morrice

Director Integrated Education Fund, Co-Chair Museum of the Troubles and Peace, Hon. President European Movement NI, Member Women in International Security (WIS) Advisory Cttee (Former Deputy Speaker NI Assembly, NI Women's Coalition, Vice President EESC, Deputy Chief NI Equality Commissioner, Head EC Office, BBC Belfast reporter)

Personal/professional background

Born in Belfast, I was a teenager when the Northern Ireland troubles began. My late teens were spent waking up to the news of riots, bombs and sectarian murders on the streets. In those days of 'tit-for-tat' killings, if a Protestant was killed one day, it would be a Catholic the next. The army was deployed and soldiers set up checkpoints throughout the city. We were stopped and searched everywhere we went. The streets were dangerous, particularly at night and the best we could do was socialise locally or stay home and keep ourselves to ourselves. As the years went by, we started getting used to the conflict and tried to live our lives as normally as we could. It was only when I left Belfast to move abroad that I came to fully understand the life we were living was far from normal.

Many of my family members were committed unionists so I experienced the conflict hearing the commentary from that perspective. In those days it was rare to hear voices of reason. Angry voices dominated the airwaves and the silence from the Churches, the schools and other civic leaders was deafening. I hated the bigotry we heard constantly in the media and the violence we saw daily on the street. All I wanted to do was escape. As soon as we could, my sister, my brother and I left home to study and eventually live abroad. My mother was sad to see us go but she knew it would be better for us to move away from the horror that was unfolding in our country.

In 1973, the UK and Ireland joined the EU and I started a course in 'European studies' at the University of Ulster. After completing my degree, I settled in Brussels working as a journalist and learning about the European peace project. I returned in 1986 as a reporter for BBC Belfast while the conflict was still raging. My first 'atrocities' was the Enniskillen bomb in 1987 when the reporter brought back the interview in which Gordon Wilson forgave the killers for murdering his daughter. This interview was a watershed moment in the Northern Ireland troubles. I also covered the attack by Michael Stone on mourners in Milltown cemetery and witnessed at first hand the mayhem created. It was also my first interview with Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams.

It was not until my son was born in 1991, that I realised I had to live up to my responsibility as a mother to contribute to positive change in Northern Ireland so he would not have to live the life I had experienced. I took the position of European Commission representative to NI, invited EC President, Jacques Delors to visit and in 1994, the year of the ceasefires, working with the local MEPs, we initiated the first £multi-million EU PEACE Programme. That is now in its fifth programme having spent many £billion supporting grass roots peace building initiatives in NI and the border counties of Ireland. This programme is heralded as the most successful PEACE programme ever operated by the EU which helped lay the foundation for the Good Friday Agreement.

The recipients of EU PEACE funds were mainly community activists working at the coal face of the troubles, many of whom were women. My first encounter was with May Blood a community worker on the Shankill Road before she became a Baroness. Impressed by their efforts, I accepted immediately when I was invited to the first meeting of what became the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. We created the party, selected two negotiators for the peace talks, Monica McWilliams and Pearl Sagar, and agreed to operate on the principles of inclusion, equality and human rights.

On the final days leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, I was on the team looking over the draft text. As a keen advocate of Integrated Education, I wanted to ensure provision was made to promote Catholic and Protestant children learning together. We described this as a "culture of tolerance" and inserted the words "to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing" which appear in the final text. Had the Women's Coalition not been there, there would have been no mention of integrated education in the Agreement. In 2020, I took up the position of Director of the Integrated Education Fund.

In the elections which followed the Good Friday Agreement, I was elected alongside Monica McWilliams to the new NI Assembly representing the NI Women's Coalition. Because we crossed the divide in every direction, we chose to designate ourselves as 'other' which meant we had no vote on matters of political import. On one highly controversial occasion, I changed my designation to unionist to secure the re-election of the First and Deputy First Ministers. Two years later, I was elected Deputy Speaker, a position I held until the Assembly was suspended in 2003. We closed the Women's Coalition down in 2006, having achieved our ten year goal of contributing to peace in Northern Ireland.

I went on to serve as Deputy Chief Equality Commissioner and NI representative to the Brussels-based European Economic and Social Committee. In both roles, I carried on my work for peacebuilding and gender equality. I authored several EESC reports on the EU role in the NI peace process <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/europe/docs/eesc231008.pdf> and specialised in conflict resolution throughout my 15 year term in office. This included exchange of experience missions to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Turkey and Cyprus promoting the role of women in conflict resolution. My time in the EESC was cut short by Brexit in January 2020 when all UK members had to leave the EU civic forum. I have since described the day of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement as the best day of my career and the day of the Brexit referendum result as the worst.

Proposals to the Sub Committee

1) Brexit - extending the NI Protocol to Scotland - a creative, constructive compromise

Since 2016, I have dedicated my career to campaigning against Brexit and finding solutions to reducing the negative impact on Northern Ireland. Immediately after the referendum, I launched a petition calling for NI to remain in the EU as part of the UK. <https://www.change.org/p/theresa-may-mp-grant-northern-ireland-honorary-eu-association-to-remain-as-part-of-the-european-union> The demands in this petition closely reflect the NI Protocol which I regard as the best of a bad Brexit deal. Aware of the objection to the Protocol from the Unionist/Loyalist community because of the perceived border in the Irish Sea, I have proposed an alternative which should serve to satisfy all stakeholders.

The extension of the NI Protocol to Scotland would effectively move the Irish Sea border to the Scottish/English border and Scotland, like Northern Ireland, would remain in the EU as part of the UK. This new 'Celtic Protocol' could meet the needs of Scotland, NI, the UK and the EU in one fell swoop and give the two UK nations which voted to remain in the EU the best of all worlds. In Edinburgh, it could help satisfy Scottish independence supporters who would see the Protocol as a 'waiting room' for EU membership. It would also appease Scottish frustration at not being offered the same competitive advantage as Northern Ireland. In Belfast, it would help calm loyalist concerns over the constitutional status of Northern Ireland by bringing Scotland into the equation. In London, it might also serve as a means to mollify calls for Scottish independence by answering Scotland's call for an arrangement similar to Northern Ireland. In Brussels and Dublin, it would be seen as a means to stabilise peace in Ireland and finally lay Brexit to rest.

A 'Celtic Protocol' could have a positive impact on both a political and practical level. In logistical terms, the Scottish border, covering 100 miles, would be easier to regulate than the Irish border which is 300 miles long with dozens of crossing points where smuggling could be rife. In political terms, the Irish were seen to have won their case against a hard border in part by warning about the risk of violence to any new border infrastructure. The Unionist/Loyalist community feel Northern Ireland has been cut adrift from the rest of the UK by the Protocol and their British identity has been diluted. This has seeded the potential for a violent reaction, some of which we have seen in recent weeks. The inclusion of Scotland could go some way to changing this political perception.

If Brussels, London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Dublin were willing to take the risk for peace, the Scottish solution may be the answer. The fact that the Protocol entitles these nations to benefit from EU trading arrangements while remaining within their home country, may also serve to reduce the desire for independence or Irish unity. In the case of Northern Ireland, the demand for a referendum on a united Ireland would have been much stronger in the event of a hard Brexit. As it stands, the Protocol serves to assure NI's position in the UK for the foreseeable future, making space for the time needed for an in-depth debate on its constitutional position.

The elections in Scotland this week could prove to be a defining moment for the constitutional integrity of the UK. An interesting debate, prompted by Irish academic Dorchu Lee and others, has begun on the potential coming together of Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland (SCINi) in a 'Celtic Association' similar to the Benelux countries which founded the EU. A Celtic Protocol could help prepare that process. In economic, social and cultural terms, it would boost the region's tremendous renewable energy potential in advance of the global climate conference in Glasgow. It could also serve to regenerate cultural links between Scotland, Ireland and the age-old Ulster/Scots connection with America. For example, with US support, the locally produced musical 'On Eagles Wing' telling the story of the Ulster/Scots heritage and the link with over a dozen US Presidents could do for NI what Riverdance did for Ireland on the world cultural stage. It would be ideal for this musical to be relaunched by President Biden during his first visit to Ireland which should include a trip to Northern Ireland.

The role of the US engaging with both communities in Northern Ireland will be vital. President Clinton did much to change the negative unionist perception of Irish America when he spoke of 40 million Irish Americans, half of whom were of Protestant stock. With invitations to the White House and other diplomatic approaches, he reached out to the Unionist/Loyalist community in a bid to ensure they felt America would treat them as equals. In these days of growing Unionist/Loyalist concerns for their future, the US could work alongside Europe, the UK and Ireland to ensure their voices



are being heard. The poster below which has appeared in many parts of Northern Ireland speaks for itself.

2) US&EU joint Reconciliation fund

The United States and the European Union both have a vested interest in maintaining peace and promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The long-standing attachment of America to its Irish roots is fabled in folklore and

visible to all. But its Ulster-Scots heritage, a centuries old link, is nowhere near as prevalent in either memory or policy making. The European Union is a relative newcomer on the scene but its history dates back to the days when the Irish pilgrim Columbanus left from the north of Ireland to discover a continent which he named Europe. These legendary links which bind the US and the EU together in a small corner of the Western world are sturdy enough to commit both to work closer together for the future of their protégé.

Both the US and the EU have shown remarkable generosity in their support for the people of Northern Ireland. The long-term financial commitment to the important work of the International Fund for Ireland is a positive demonstration of their ability to work together in areas such as youth development, breaking down barriers in local communities and working in border areas to mitigate the impact of Brexit. Also, the 'Ireland Funds America', founded by Dan Rooney and Tony O'Reilly has been very supportive of peace, reconciliation and integrated education, particularly the Dallas branch. In the 'political' space, the US and EU operate at very different levels. The US invested immense political capital at the highest level supporting the peace process from the very top down. The active involvement of both President and Hillary Clinton was hugely appreciated as is the continued involvement of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and many other elected representatives who continue to hold our interests at heart. The EU approach has been to operate from the bottom up, by supporting grass roots communities coming together and confidence building to enable the peace process to take root under its successive Peace programmes. The success of their efforts working alongside the British, Irish and local communities to bring an end to decades of conflict culminating in the Good Friday Agreement is legendary. There is no way they can allow these achievements to be in vain.

The only thing lacking in their approach to so far has been a joint US/EU effort. If this was happening behind the scenes, it was not obvious back then. But the political climate has changed. It is now time for the combined forces of European and American political, diplomatic, financial and cultural clout to step up and show their colours in support not only of peace but also orange/green reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The fifth £multi-million EU Peace programme has several more years to run but it was never intended to last forever. It's focus is shifting from peace to reconciliation but, with a mountain still to climb, it could do with a helping hand. It is important that the US join with the EU to look to the longer term working in partnership to promote community reconciliation for years, if not decades to come. Peacebuilding needs long-term sustainability, particularly in circumstances that are producing major challenges.

The Biden administration commitment to supporting the Good Friday Agreement is widely welcomed but there are concerns in some quarters that Irish America will overly influence its approach. The EU was seen as an 'honest broker' in the peace process because the UK and Ireland were equal members of the EU. But the Euro-sceptics who brought about Brexit were almost exclusively on the unionist side. This means any joint approach must ensure the US and the EU deal with an even hand to ensure 'parity of esteem'. Because unionism has little influence in America and the UK departure from the European stage has left the British out on a limb this will be difficult. By acting together in the interest of community integration and reconciliation, the US and EU could prove the doubters wrong.

The Good Friday Agreement brought violent conflict to an end. But with peace walls still dividing communities in Belfast, schools and housing still somewhat segregated and many politicians still playing the Orange/Green card for electoral purposes, any new approach needs to focus on hearts and minds. In the post-EU Peace Programme period, the US could work with the EU to craft an extended and better resourced initiative that could build on existing experience and knowledge to fund work to bring our two traditional communities together in peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. This could help change the northern political landscape for the better, once and for all. With a border poll on a united Ireland potentially imminent, work towards breaking down 'them and us' barriers is more important than ever.

Entitled the US&EU Reconciliation Programme, there is no better name to herald a new beginning for communities desperately searching for a way to reconcile their differences and no better time to find a peaceful way forward for a people who deserve no less. This programme could include greater support for much needed Integrated Education in Northern Ireland. With only 7% of schools genuinely integrated, it is still possible to find young people in who never meet someone from the 'other side' until they enter higher education or move into the workplace. The integration of teacher training and the removal of the exemption for the employment of teachers could also help reconcile difference in the education system. The importance of legacy, learning from the conflict and victim support will also benefit greatly from increased US/EU funding. Organisations such as WAVE Trauma Centre for victims of the troubles and places of peacebuilding, such as the Hume Centre, Corrymela, Glencree, Cooperation Ireland and the Centre for Cross border studies will require support long into the future. I have recently been appointed Co-Chair of the organisation to establish a 'Museum of the Troubles and Peace' on a peace wall location in Belfast which we intend to be part of a network of centres throughout Northern Ireland and beyond.

3) The NI Civic Forum to be reinstated

As former Vice President (Deputy Speaker) of the European Civic Forum, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which gathers 350 business, trade union and other representatives from (then) 28 EU member States, I have long-standing experience of the value of such a consultative body on European decision making. While the EESC had no power of veto, the European Parliament and Council of Ministers were required by EU Treaty law to consult the EESC on every piece of legislation. EESC 'Opinions' based on consultation and compromise between social partners, serve to advise law makers on all aspects of EU legislation from farming to fisheries, to energy, environment and external affairs to social policy, consumer and cultural affairs.

This model was a move to encourage the participation of informed civic society representatives in a politics that was narrowed by division and the legacy of violent conflict. It is a more formalised version of the participatory democracy mechanisms such as the citizens Assemblies set up in Ireland in advance of the referenda on equal marriage and

reproductive rights. Their success is an important indicator of the value of civic consultation as a means to promote change in society. Attempts by the Irish Government to extend the reach of these assemblies on an all Ireland basis have fallen foul of unionist reluctance to participate. However, the Good Friday Agreement makes provision for a Northern Ireland Civic Forum which was proposed by the NI Women's Coalition as a means of garnering grass-roots community consultation and support for the political way forward. The Civic Forum was set up at the start of the NI Assembly but it did not get the political backing required to stay in place and was disbanded after two years.

The reinstatement of the Civic Forum would help stabilise the Assembly for the future. It would add the vital 'non political' voice to support decision-making and give clear guidance to Assembly Members at this crucial time in our history. While the views of NI farmers, business, women, youth groups and many others will provide a 'value added' perspective to all aspects of Assembly law making, the most important civic discussion will be the economic, social and cultural impact of any move towards a 'shared island'. These discussions are ongoing within the shared Island unit set up by the Taoiseach, but unionism and loyalism appears once again reluctant to participate. This may not be the case if the Civic Forum were to be reinstated and civic representatives of these groups were invited to engage.

At present, the only debate on the subject takes place either within academic circles which are often seen to be far removed from grass roots or on the airwaves which depend on the whim of the presenter or producer of the day. A constructive, creative in depth discussion which takes account of all aspects of the issues involved from the health service, to voting rights, to citizenship to cultural identity and much more should be aired in the structured inclusive confines of a Northern Ireland Civic Forum.

4) Greater South/North cooperation, collaboration, consultation and exchange

There is a serious need for greater exchange on the island of Ireland between people from all walks of life. The shared island unit in the Department of the Taoiseach is a welcome step but more could be done to foster a much needed understanding of Irish culture, traditions and structure of governance among the Unionist community in the north. At the same time, greater Unionist involvement in affairs of the South should help promote mutual understanding. The recent Irish government decision not to follow the 'tradition' of nominating a northern unionist, in this case former UFU President Senator Ian Marshall, to the Irish Senate has been met with a combination of disappointment, frustration and a rising feeling of the Unionist community being let down. If it were possible to 'reserve' a seat in the Senate for a unionist member, this should be done.

The decision to extend the Erasmus student exchange programme and the European Health Card to British and Irish citizens in Northern Ireland is a welcome development. More could be done, however, to explain to NI citizens how they can benefit from this important gesture, particularly when it comes to issues such as cancer treatment or elective surgery. Anecdotal evidence showing a patient facing a three year waiting list for a hip replacement in the North can get it done within three months in South and be reimbursed by the NHS is vital public service information which should be commonly known in Northern Ireland. On Erasmus, a North/South exchange of students on an annual basis would be a valuable contribution to mutual understanding among the youth of the island. These and more proposals are set out in my submission to the shared island unit which is detailed below.

Submission to the Shared Island Unit (December 2020)

Jane Morrice (European Unionist)

The new Shared Island unit in the Department of the Taoiseach is a welcome step in attempts by the Irish government to build greater exchange between Northern Ireland and the Republic and to develop a mutual understanding of the way forward for the people of both parts of the island of Ireland. This form of outreach backed by political will and substantial funding, is a valuable commitment of time, energy and resources which could have a real and lasting impact on North/South relations if targeted correctly and handled sensitively. Above all, it will need the necessary 'buy in' from the unionist community in Northern Ireland.

This type of outreach may not have been as necessary if it were not for the UK decision to leave the EU and the impact of Brexit on the island of Ireland and on community relations in the north. Before UK withdrawal from the EU, the island was 'shared' under the EU umbrella. The economic 'coming together' North and South has been slowly progressing since the UK and Ireland joined the EU in 1973. Increased acceptance of different political aspirations in Northern Ireland came about with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 which was also facilitated by joint EU membership. This progress which brought an end to the 30 year conflict, has been damaged by the UK departure from the EU. The effort on the part of the Irish Government to promote cross-border outreach could therefore be seen as an important exercise in damage limitation.

Understanding unionism

Viewed from a unionist perspective, the more liberal response might be to greet the shared island idea as a 'good neighbour' approach. Recognising the need for the two parts of Ireland to get to know each other better, the Irish government is reaching the hand of friendship to British citizens who live in an adjoining state and share the same island. Others think very differently. They see it as the start of a 'slippery slope' to a United Ireland which explains their negative attitude towards the idea. The unionist majority in the north is made up of several shades of the same political colour. Generally speaking, any positive shift in unionist attitudes towards Irish nationalism was brought about by their experience of power sharing on the basis of equality and the example set by the Paisley/McGuinness leadership. The progressive change in the unionist approach to cross border relations was fostered, mainly in the business sector, by the Single EU Market and the removal of the border in all but name. Given the differing unionist/nationalist positions on EU

membership, cross-community division has been brought into sharper focus as a result of Brexit by strengthening unionist loyalties to the will of the British people and the destiny of the UK outside the EU.

EU membership has been a long standing bone of contention between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. In line with Irish thinking, the nationalist community was more eager to embrace all things European particularly because it allowed them to leap-frog London and gain an equal place with the UK and others at the top table in Brussels. In spite of the fact that Northern Ireland was a net recipient of EU funds, the unionist community reflected the British position as a 'reluctant' member of the European club. As members of the European Parliament, the Hume/Paisley relationship offered some confidence in the ability of both to work together, particularly with their joint support for the introduction of the EU PEACE programme, but their relationship was always more strained when they returned home from Strasbourg.

While the nationalist/unionist divide was blurred to a certain extent by the Good Friday solution, differences within the unionist community itself can be reflected in their own internal positions on both the Good Friday Agreement and EU membership. The element of unionism that was anti-Agreement was also pro 'Leave' while the other was pro-Agreement and anti Leave. Eventually, the anti-Agreement unionists were resigned to accept the will of the people of Northern Ireland and eager to accept Brexit as the will of the British people. By the same token, the pro-Agreement unionists are resigned to accept Brexit as a fait accompli because it was a UK-wide decision. The result for unionists of all shades is dissatisfaction, demoralisation and diminishing return. This is not a good place for them to be.

On social issues, the divide within unionism was further deepened by the referenda in the Republic on equal marriage and abortion. This led to acceptance among liberal unionism that the South was moving further away from the old adage 'Home Rule means Rome rule', while the others perceived it as a step too far from their position on these issues. It also served as a reminder of their inability to influence the march of change in any 'shared island' context. The Celtic tiger also contributed to changing unionist attitudes. The days when the road surface on the border changed from good in the North to bad in the South are gone. The Belfast-Dublin enterprise, the motorway, holidays in Donegal and access to Dublin airport, Aerlingus and Ryanair made cross-border exchange speedy, seamless and enjoyable.

On the economic front, while northern nationalists would generally regard the impressive high tech revolution in the South as a welcome development, some unionists appear to resent the shift in prosperity from the once glory days of the industrialised north when the Belfast shipyard was the centre of Protestant employment. Aware of the decline in Northern fortunes and the heavy dependency on London for support, many unionists are concerned for their future and some fear being cut adrift by an increasingly English nationalist culture. The National Health Service is still their saving grace and most shades of unionism believe this is the solid ground on which any attempt at uniting Ireland will fall.

Creative constitutional thinking

On the constitutional question, the change in language from 'united' to 'shared' is a welcome recognition of the sensitivities involved. There are those, however, in the unionist community who believe the word 'island' should be plural rather than singular and placed in the context of the British/Irish isles. To this end, creative thinking beyond the island should be encouraged within the shared island unit. This should not ignore the role Scotland could play in future relations between the islands. With the tide turning as a result of Brexit, Scotland could hold the key to the future of Northern Ireland. An independent Scotland searching for a way back to the EU will have no better place to look than through Ireland. On its way, it will recognise the value of Northern Ireland as the link between both. An idea floated by a Dublin academic proposes a coming together of Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland (SCINI) in an arrangement similar to the BENELUX countries of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, which formed the origin of the EU. The potential for SCINI to provide the Orange/Green balance to divided loyalties in the North should not be underestimated.

With the unionist/nationalist demographic balance likely to be tipped following the centenary year of the creation of Northern Ireland and a border poll triggered thereafter, there are monumental challenges ahead. In the lead up to a decision on the timing of any referendum, it will be vital to learn the lesson from Brexit. Adequate time must be allocated for discussion, debate and clear understanding before decisions are thrust on the people. Vital issues such as voting rights, including age, nationality and obligation, must be decided well in advance. The greatest challenge will be to accommodate all shades of unionist colour on the way forward. Outreach is vital but, following the courageous example of previous peace builders such as John Hume, David Trimble, Baroness May Blood, Mary McAleese and Mo Mowlam, it must be considered from every angle, including those regarded as less palatable.

The role of US/EU/GB/IRL

On this path, Northern Ireland will need continued and substantial backing from all those with 'skin in the game'. Most important are the citizens of the North whether British, Irish, both or neither. They must be consulted, through civic fora, opinion polling and education every step of the way. In terms of 'outside influence' the United States will be a major player, particularly when Joe Biden takes over in Washington. US political pressure set the stage for ground-breaking 'Fair Employment Legislation' providing equal access to the workplace. The intervention of the Clintons in the early days of the peace process was a substantial influence on its success. A new strategy from a Biden administration with an intricate understanding of the value of EU input, might even be able to reach beyond the achievements of its Democratic predecessors.

The US approach to the peace process has always been seen as 'top-down'. It's use of the grand Presidential stage, megaphone diplomacy, visa flexibility and inclusion of the unionist dimension under the Clinton administration was a master-stroke in brinkmanship. When Bill Clinton announced that of the 40 million Irish Americans, half were Protestant, his words resonated in Belfast. At last, many unionists thought, orange voices were being heard in Irish America. When Hillary Clinton defended the voice of women in the peace negotiations, at last, many women thought, their voices were being heard in the world. The EU strategy has always been much more 'bottom-up' with support going to farmers, local

infrastructure and cross community, cross border initiatives. The EU decision to continue its PEACE and INTERREG programmes post Brexit is a mark of its unswerving dedication and commitment to continue targeting grass-roots funding to support peace and reconciliation and enhance the social and economic standing of those most in need.

Together, the US and EU will play an important role in the future of NI. The top-down/bottom up approach, using a combination of political pressure and economic support, will enable the EU/US partnership to pull the levers which will help Northern Ireland find its place in a shared Ireland. Alongside Britain and Ireland, their role will be as vital as each leg on a four-legged stool keeping the people of Northern Ireland balanced and stable and securing a prosperous, peaceful future for their place in history. These relationships should be encouraged within the structures of the GFA. Given the sensitivity of the peace process and the concrete commitment by all to the Good Friday Agreement, they are unlikely to miss any opportunity to protect their investment in peace and reconciliation by finding what could be a long-lasting solution to a century-old conflict.

The way forward - 12-point plan

Against this backdrop, accommodating unionism in a shared island and increasing Irish understanding of their British neighbours presents a growing and serious challenge. There are, however ways in which cross fertilisation of North/South ideas could and should be encouraged. These include:

- the creation of a similar shared island unit within the NI Executive
- a reinstated NI civic forum working in partnership with an Irish citizens Assembly
- use of EU ERASMUS student, teacher and worker exchange on a North/South basis
- recognition of integrated education as a valued method of understanding difference
- reviewing the possibility of dual House of Lords/Senate mandate
- increased North/South, East/West cooperation under INTERREG also including Scotland
- closer cooperation with British/Irish Association and North/South inter parliamentary links
- stepping up the number of 'joint' events, such as North/South business conferences
- greater cultural cooperation such as music festivals to help local bands and young people post Covid
- an all island high tech cyber strategy to promote reconciliation, youth leadership and prevent youth radicalisation
- Increased cooperation with International Fund for Ireland, peace-building and cross- border NGOs
- regular US/EU/UK/IRL expert and summit meetings to agree progress

WhiteDoveWay <https://janemorrice.com/?p=143>

I have also been working on an ambitious new project to create a European path of peace from Northern Ireland to Nicosia, linking the two divided islands on either side of the EU, tracing the legacy of EU peacebuilding in the aftermath of world war and following in the footsteps of Columbanus, the Irish pilgrim, said to be the patron Saint of Europe. This proposal was approved by the EESC in 2019 and has been sent to the EU decision making institutions for follow-up. As Columbanus (White Dove) is also the Patron Saint of motorcycles, I have proposed that the first attempt at the 3000 + mile route should be done by motorbike and the Harley Davidson Association of Greece is ready and willing to take up the challenge. I have also commissioned a 4 minute 'Virtual Reality' experience of the path of peace showing the white dove breaking down the Belfast peace walls and moving into the trenches of Flanders fields. I would eventually like this to be a ten minute Virtual Reality 'history book' of peacebuilding in Europe available in schools throughout the EU.

Northern Ireland - on the cusp of greatness

The centenary of the creation of the state of Northern Ireland is the year the nation starts facing up to its greatest constitutional challenge. But Northern Ireland is not alone. At no other time in the post-partition history of the British/Irish isles have all five nations which make up the UK and Ireland faced the changes which now confront each and every one. Brought on by the UK vote to leave the EU supported by two of its four nations, Brexit is already cracking under the heavy weight of its irresponsibility. With calls for a Scottish independence referendum and an Irish border poll growing louder, tension over customs borders increasing and tens of thousands of British citizens applying for Irish passports, the potential for confusion leading to chaos is significant.

Northern Ireland would be at the heart of any solution and rightly so. Its experience of conflict and peacebuilding is a microcosm of the EU story. It is perfectly placed between Britain and Ireland to become the link between two countries destined to grow apart as the reality of UK/EU withdrawal bites. But Northern Ireland has something to offer the global stage as well. Sitting on the crossroads of Europe and America with historic ties and vested interests on both sides, Northern Ireland is well placed to help bridge the trans-Atlantic divide in a Western alliance built to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Because of their global reach, Coronavirus, climate change, radical extremism and world poverty can only be combatted by acting together. By joining forces, America and Europe could live up to their global responsibility to work for the common good of the world. Northern Ireland has the political know-how, the connections, the youthful skill set, the sorry experience and the powerful success story to help bring US&EU together.

It is said that it takes as long to build peace as it does to fight war. If that is the case, Northern Ireland is set to emerge from 30 years of peacebuilding after thirty years of conflict, in 2028, the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, as a role model for conflict resolution worldwide. It's potential to return to the glory days of the building of the Titanic on a new foundation of equality, inclusion, human rights and mutual respect will be world beating and the opportunities for its role as a trade and investment gateway to Europe and the world will be second to none.

A peaceful, prosperous, industrious nation with a reputation for scenic beauty, friendly hospitality and 'craic' will find tourists and investors flocking to its shores to witness the wonder of a place which has emerged from terrible tragedy to find its way in the world.

Thanking you in advance for giving me the rare opportunity to address the highest level of US political decision-making, I want to express my appreciation for the dedication, commitment and support the US has given to the cause of peace and reconciliation in my beloved country.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you very much, Ms. Morrice.
And I will now turn to our final witness, Ambassador Reiss.
Thank you for your past service, and you are now recognized for
your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MITCHELL REISS, COMMISSIONER,
INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION**

Mr. REISS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the sub-committee, for inviting me to testify today.

Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol have caused great anxiety over Northern Ireland's constitutional, political, and economic future. For many protestants in the north, they have also raised fundamental questions over their future status and identity.

However, even if Northern Ireland's status after Brexit is settled, there are three persistent challenges that will continue to impact its future: paramilitarism, group transition, and legacy issues.

Paramilitarism, in all its forms, is a threat to the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement, whether your goal is a united Ireland, or the preservation of civil societies and the rule of law in both the north and the south. An estimated 17,000 members belong to so-called Loyalist paramilitary organizations alone. To provide some perspective, the equivalent number in the United States would be almost 3 million paramilitary members.

A purely law-and-order approach cannot end paramilitarism. You cannot simply arrest your way out of this problem. This approach must be balanced with one that addresses socioeconomic deprivation in those communities, where the paramilitaries operate, and exert coercive control. These communities suffer from educational underattainment, unemployment, poverty, a lack of investment, mental health issues and drug addiction. Data show there is a direct correlation between paramilitarism and this type of deprivation.

The political leaders in Northern Ireland need to own a comprehensive approach, meaning they have to provide the appropriate resources, closely supervise the relevant government bodies to ensure implementation, and to be accountable for its success.

A second related issue is how to engage with those paramilitaries that want to transition to a different nonviolent form. There currently is no formal process that allows key stakeholders to have a seat at the table and ensure that their voices are heard. In the past, London has been more focused on other issues and political and community leaders in Northern Ireland have been reluctant to engage with alleged criminals and convicted felons, for fear of public criticism and the political risks involved.

Such a process is urgently needed, because the paramilitaries will not disappear on their own. They are not capable of self-transition. Further, time is not on our side. The situation is likely to get worse before it gets better. And group transition is closely intertwined with the U.K.'s efforts to address and resolve a related issue: the legacy cases deriving from The Troubles.

As Professor McWilliams mentioned earlier, the Stormont House Agreement in December 2014 established certain principles and structures to deal with the legacy of the past. This legacy process involves three elements: The first is an oral history archive, which

serves as a repository of the experiences from The Troubles; second is an Historical Investigations Unit, which investigates Troubles-related deaths, and may refer cases for criminal prosecution; and third, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval, which enables victims and other survivors to confidentially receive information the Independent Commission has acquired about The Troubles-related deaths of their relatives.

Any information acquired by the Independent Commission will not be disclosed to law enforcement or intelligence agencies, and will be inadmissible in criminal and civil proceedings.

There currently is no consensus in Northern Ireland among the political parties, or the more than four dozen victims groups as to how these legacy bodies should function. One reason is because it is unclear whether information about past criminality, provided to the Historical Investigations Unit, will take precedence over information provided to the Independent Commission with respect to possible criminal prosecutions. This resulting uncertainty deters paramilitary members from engaging with any of the legacy bodies or participating in any type of transition process, for fear of criminally implicating themselves.

Finally, I want to endorse the appointment of a Special Envoy for Northern Ireland. I believe, like my two fellow testimoneys today, I believe the United States can once more play a crucial role in helping the people in the north. The United States brings a long track record of proven diplomatic success, and has the ability to help the political parties, and leaders in London and Dublin, with the challenges that I have mentioned above.

Once again, thank you for inviting me to testify today and for your time. I would welcome any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Reiss follows:]

**Testimony
of
Mitchell B. Reiss**

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber
Wednesday, May 5, 2021

“Reaffirming the Good Friday Agreement”

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify today about the status of the Good Friday Agreement, the current situation in Northern Ireland, and some key issues confronting the people there, the political parties at Stormont and the two governments in London and Dublin.

It is a pleasure to appear again before this Committee. Fifteen years ago, while serving as President George W. Bush’s Special Envoy to the Northern Ireland Peace Process, I testified to the remarkable progress that had been achieved under the Good Friday Agreement, as well as to the not insignificant challenges that lay ahead. As you know, we were able to achieve a breakthrough at the St. Andrews summit in late 2006, which led to the political parties, notably Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), agreeing to restore a Northern Ireland Assembly and to form a Northern Ireland Executive at Stormont House in May 2007. I left the State Department around that time, thinking that “the Troubles” were over and that Northern Ireland could now begin to enjoy a purely peaceful and democratic political future.

Much progress has been made since the Good Friday Agreement. This has been due the efforts of many people, foremost the community leaders from both traditions in Northern Ireland, but also including political leaders there, the NIO, the police and security services, and the government in London. The support of Dublin, Washington, the EU, as well as the generous efforts of Irish-American citizens, NGOs and foundations, have also been instrumental in advancing the transition to a more normal society.

But sadly, Northern Ireland has still not realized the full promise of the Good Friday Agreement.

An upsurge in paramilitary violence a few years ago led the British and Irish governments to form a four-person Independent Reporting Commission (IRC) to help end paramilitarism in Northern Ireland; I was asked to serve as the UK Representative on the Commission. Please note that I am appearing before this Committee today in my personal capacity.

A number of challenges currently confront Northern Ireland. Perhaps the most prominent is the UK's decision to leave the European Union. The terms that London and Brussels negotiated and how those agreements may be interpreted and applied in light of previous agreements, including the Good Friday Agreement, have caused much anxiety over Northern Ireland's constitutional, political and economic future. For many Protestants in the North, they have also raised fundamental questions over their future status and identity. The implications of Brexit continue to reverberate in Northern Ireland, indeed, across the entire island of Ireland.

The Troubles cast a long shadow

Even if, or when, questions over Northern Ireland's status in light of Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol are settled, other issues remain that will continue to impact its future.

I want very briefly to highlight three of these challenges.

1. Paramilitarism

Paramilitarism in all its forms continues to be a scourge in the communities where it operates, and a threat to the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement, whether your goal is a united Ireland or the preservation of civil societies North and South with respect for the rule of law.

An estimated 17,000 members belong in some capacity to so-called Loyalist paramilitary organizations alone. To provide some perspective, the equivalent proportionate number in the United States would be almost 3 million paramilitary members.

These numbers do not tell the whole story, as there are different categories of paramilitary membership. These include some who have already decided on a peaceful future but remain in their groups rather than walk away and leave the field to darker forces. Others are involved for what they believe are genuine ideological or political reasons to do with identity or insecurity; many of these members remain available for “duty” or “service” or “support” of various kinds, but, if left to themselves, are not actively involved in ongoing paramilitary activity or criminality. Still others continue to threaten and attack police and prison officers and individuals linked to their own paramilitary groups.

And then there are a much smaller number of paramilitary members who use paramilitarism as a flag of convenience for pure criminality: assaults, extortion, drugs, and other crimes, including threats to political representatives and journalists. The paramilitary label allows them to rationalize or justify their activities in the context of Northern Ireland and its history; it grants them a type of legitimacy that resonates for some in their communities. These paramilitary members are the most likely to be involved in coercive control of communities and in recruiting vulnerable young people into their ranks.

There are also differing attitudes in the communities where the paramilitaries operate. Most community members reject paramilitarism and see its continuation as unacceptable and morally wrong in the context of modern-day Northern Ireland; paramilitarism is seen as purely a matter of criminality to be handled by law enforcement. But for some in these communities, paramilitaries are regarded not as outsiders, but as “part of us, part of who we are.” And in some cases, the paramilitaries are even seen as “go to” people, particularly in terms of dealing with local criminal and anti-social behavior, including drugs.

One approach to addressing this problem is through policing and the criminal justice system. The work of the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, together with the measures being undertaken by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) more broadly, and the ongoing work of the UK Security Service and An Garda Síochána, have all helped. Neighborhood policing, with the trust and confidence of the local communities, is also essential.

However, there is more that can and should be done. The wheels of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland turn exceedingly slowly; often it

appears as if justice delayed is justice denied. Also, there should be a dedicated, stand-alone agency that focuses solely on civil recovery of the proceeds of crime in Northern Ireland, similar to what is in place in other jurisdictions.

Very few people who have examined this issue believe that a purely law-order approach can end paramilitarism; in other words, you cannot simply arrest your way out of this problem. Hand-in-hand with a policing and criminal justice approach is one that also addresses the socio-economic deprivation in many of those communities where paramilitaries operate and exert coercive control. These communities suffer from educational under-attainment, adverse childhood experiences, unemployment, poverty, lack of investment, mental health issues and drugs.

Of course, not all paramilitary activity is rooted in socio-economic deprivation, but data show there is a direct correlation between the two; it serves as a fuel and driver of paramilitarism.

Only a holistic, all-of-government approach that incorporates both a law-and-order strand and a socio-economic strand has a chance of being successful. In practice, the political leaders in Northern Ireland have to “own” this approach, meaning they have to provide the appropriate resources, closely supervise the NIO, PSNI and other elements of the government to ensure implementation, and be accountable for its success.

Whether the goal is a united Ireland or civil societies North and South with respect for the rule of law, paramilitarism in all its forms threatens the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement.

2. Group Transition

An idea that has recently gained some renewed traction to address the paramilitary problem has been to engage with paramilitary groups and help them “transition” to a different, non-violent form. As to the process by which this would be accomplished, The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland (June 2016) outlined some sensible steps:

- End recruitment into the group;
- Give up paramilitary structures, weapons, training and activities;

- Cease paramilitary-style attacks and all other forms of violence or threats of violence;
- Cease to exercise coercive control in neighborhoods; and
- Commit to the rule of law, including support for the PSNI.

Each of these issues is complex; they would all need to be defined, debated and discussed at length. To give but one example, there is no common understanding of what “group transition” even means. Similar confusion and misunderstanding surround other terms that are often used in this context: deproscription, disbandment, dismantlement, demobilization, decriminalization and reintegration. As we all know, if you can’t first define the problem, you cannot hope to solve it. And however these terms are defined, there will need to be some credible way to monitor any progress along this journey.

For any of this to happen, there needs to be a formal political process that allows the key stakeholders to have a seat at the table and ensure that their voices are heard. In the past, London has been more focused on other issues, and political and community leaders in Northern Ireland have been reluctant to engage with putative criminals and convicted felons for fear of public criticism and the political risks involved.

I believe that such a process is urgently needed, because first, the paramilitaries will not disappear on their own. They are not capable of “self-transitioning,” even if they have the incentive, as they lack the experience or expertise to do so. Second, time is not on the side of inaction. Without a new initiative, the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better. And third, group transition is closely intertwined with the UK’s efforts to address and resolve a related issue: the legacy cases deriving from the Troubles.

3. Legacy

The Stormont House Agreement (December 2014) committed London, Dublin and the Northern Ireland political parties to deal with the past according to certain principles. The parties agreed to:

- promote reconciliation;
- uphold the rule of law;
- acknowledge and address the suffering of victims and survivors;
- facilitate the pursuit of justice and information recovery;

- be human rights compliant; and
- be balanced, proportionate, transparent, fair and equitable.

The Legacy process itself involves three elements: (i) an Oral History Archive, which serves as a shared repository of experiences and narratives from the Troubles, (ii) an Historical Investigations Unit, which investigates Troubles-related deaths and may refer cases for criminal prosecution, and (iii) the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR), which enables victims and survivors to confidentially receive information the ICIR has acquired about the Troubles-related deaths of their relatives. Any information acquired by the ICIR will not be disclosed to law enforcement or intelligence agencies and will be inadmissible in criminal and civil proceedings.

This initiative, while admirable in many ways, contains its own complications. Memories of the past, and especially the violence and ongoing trauma of the Troubles, are ever-present in Northern Ireland. Legacy issues are controversial because there is the sense that whoever owns the past will be able to chart the future. In other words, reconstructing or reinterpreting the past is a way to build a dominant narrative of the Troubles, which may either benefit or disadvantage certain political parties and even marginalize entire sectarian groups. There is no consensus in Northern Ireland among the political parties or the more-than-four-dozen victims groups as to how these Legacy bodies should operate.

Investigating the past through the Legacy structures also places in tension the desire to understand what actually happened in the past with a reluctance by those with such information to come forward for fear it might implicate them and others in criminality. Specifically, it is unclear whether information provided to the Historical Investigations Unit will take precedence over information provided to ICIR with respect to criminal prosecutions. This tension, and the resulting uncertainty, provides a significant disincentive for paramilitary members to come forward and engage not only with any of the Legacy bodies, but also to participate in any group transition process.

Appointing a U.S. Special Envoy

My final comments address the wisdom of having a U.S. Special Envoy to assist the Northern Ireland peace process. For many years after I left this position at the State Department, I did not see the need. I believed the political leadership in Northern Ireland, with support from London, Dublin

and others, could step up to their responsibilities and work together to forge a new future. I was wrong.

I support the idea of a Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, believing that the United States once more can play a crucial role in helping the people of Northern Ireland. The United States brings a long track record of proven success in Northern Ireland, and has the ability to leverage outside resources and provide new ideas to help the parties, and the two governments, with the challenges I've mentioned above.

This recommendation comes with two further suggestions. First, the Biden Administration should consult with London and Dublin to ensure that they would welcome the appointment of a Special Envoy. There is no point in the U.S. intervening if our assistance would not be wanted. For the record, I believe such an appointment would be welcomed.

Second, the person selected should be the *President's* Special Envoy and not the Special Envoy of the Secretary of State. While this may seem like a minor point of protocol, this distinction will highlight the importance President Biden and his administration assign to this effort and help ensure that the Special Envoy will be accorded the appropriate access when meeting with British and Irish officials.

Once again, thank you for inviting me to testify today, and for your time. I would welcome any questions you might have.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Ambassador.

I thank all of our witnesses for their testimony.

I will now recognize members for 5 minutes each, pursuant to House rules. All time yielded is for the purposes of questioning our witnesses. Because of the virtual format of this hearing, I will recognize members by committee seniority, alternating between Democrats and Republicans. If you miss your turn, please let our staff know. We will circle back to you. If you seek recognition, you must unmute your microphone and address the chair verbally.

I will start by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

I want to thank our witnesses, and, if you could, I think Ms. Morrice has already touched on specifics as the Ambassador, too, as well as, to an extent, Professor McWilliams. But can you talk to the American public now, and tell them how important U.S. involvement is in these negotiations, and specifically, how, besides the suggestions in your opening statements, U.S. involvement can be crucial, not just in dealing with the most recent overflow of Brexit issues, but, also, in the longstanding commitment that is not quite yet met.

So if you could, I will let anyone jump in if they want to, but is your chance to talk to the American public as well.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Thank you, Chair.

I will briefly just address that, in that it has been my own experience of having Senator Mitchell involved in our peace negotiations, but, also, going to the United States over those years on a regular basis, and speaking to Congress Members. It was incredible how much that was valued back home, but it was also incredible that each time we started putting forward proposals, we asked, How could the U.S. help us with this? Who should we talk to in the U.S. in relation to this? And that paid off.

And for that reason, both the Irish Government and the U.K. Government and the Northern Ireland Government all look to the U.S. as friends, as good friends, that have helped them to build stability along the way.

And in relation to the EU-U.K. Trade and Cooperation Agreement, I think this is crucial in that the U.S. Government should make it clear that it expects to see the adherence to these standards, in terms of labor rights and social protections and environmental standards.

We have come a long way, and I, myself, know that, as a woman who did not have any of those rights until the European Union came in, in relation to sex discrimination, equal pay, and many other rights. We would not have got those had the European Directives not pushed the U.K. Government in that direction and, hence, the flow over to Northern Ireland.

The same applies now. We cannot afford to cut back on the rights that are in place. We need to maintain them and sustain them. But, likewise, there is a concern that without the oversight from the U.S. that that could potentially happen, and that, certainly, would be a step backward.

And the other point that I think is really important, and I made it, was that if there were to be a U.S. Envoy, then there would be a contact, a regular contact in relation to this concern about whether or not this Protocol is positive or not, because it seems to be a

tennis match going on between the two governments. And we cannot afford that, lobbing the ball back and forwards. That is feeding into the negativity in the community, and these young Loyalists who are taking to the streets, believing there is nothing in it for them.

And, so, it is that third-party person with gravitas, with integrity, with honesty, who has acted in that role in the past; when that voice speaks up, people listen.

When I think on the European, positive messages at the moment that are turned into such negative ones; and to show that if there are technical problems, they can be fixed. And that these are not big political constitutional issues that they have been turned in to be. And that those negotiations with the EU, where there needs to be more slack, where it does not have to be so problematic, I think that is also where you bring the experience from the U.S. in terms of your trade negotiations. And that would be much valued. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. We have a little over a minute of my time left. Does anyone else want to suggest—Ms. Morrice.

Ms. MORRICE. May I come in quickly? Because I think what is—to talk to the American people, I think it is very important. Irish America is well-known, but do not forget your Ulster-Scots roots.

President Clinton said it himself: Of the 40 million Irish-Americans, half are Protestant stock. The Ulster-Scots, I understand that there are more than a dozen American Presidents were Ulster-Scots.

And, so, there is a brilliant musical called *On Eagle's Wing*, which could be bigger than *River Dance*, promoting the Ulster-Scots legacy, and really lifting, lifting up that culture, and putting it on the same level, so making Irish America Ulster-Scots America as well.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

Mr. REISS. Mr. Chairman do I have time for a moment?

Mr. KEATING. Briefly, yes.

Mr. REISS. Very briefly.

So the United States is the most optimistic country in the world. We are positive. We are forward-looking. I think that sense of optimism is needed in many places, and certainly in Northern Ireland. And I think that is the role that the United States has played in the past, where we do bring a sense of possibility to the conversations.

The U.K. and Ireland are our friends and allies. It is possible to say things to them in private that they need to hear, and still have credibility.

So I think it is the public ability to be positive and encouraging, the private ability to tell important messages to the two capitals. And I think also, Irish America, many, many individuals have played important roles as private citizens, and I think all of those can be energized and organized by a Special Envoy. And that is why I endorse the Biden Administration's appointing one.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Ambassador. Thank our witnesses.

Now I would like to call on Representative Pfluger for 5 minutes of questioning. Representative Pfluger.

Mr. PFLUGER. Yes. Can you hear me? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, yes, I can.

Mr. PFLUGER. And I appreciate the opportunity on this hearing. Thank you for the leadership.

To all the witnesses on the panel, thank you for your commentary and this important discussion.

I wanted to ask, Ambassador Reiss, you mentioned in the written testimony that an all-of-government approach to address the paramilitarism issue in Northern Ireland must incorporate not only a law-and-order strand, but also a socioeconomic piece to it.

And I was wondering if you could elaborate on the latter, and then maybe address how the United States can help address the socioeconomic drivers of the paramilitarism activity and what we can do.

Mr. REISS. Yes. Thank you for your question. I would also like to invite my colleague, Professor McWilliams, to jump in on this.

There are multiple reasons why these communities are failing, and I mentioned some of them: educational underattainment, lack of jobs, an opportunity to make easy money selling drugs, mental health issues. These are areas where Protestant paramilitaries, in many cases, most cases, these are criminal gangs that are just preying on vulnerable families and young people.

The British Government needs to do a better job of comprehensively addressing this issue, in my view, and assigning somebody who wakes up every morning, and that is the first thing they think about, and holds people accountable.

Many, many people are doing good work in the government and in the communities, but there has not really been that all-of-government effort that I think is necessary. And it also has to be sustained. We know in our inner cities poverty, economic deprivation, educational underattainment, these are really hard, almost passed down intergenerational problems.

And so, again, I think that there may be some lessons from the United States that we can offer. There are other lessons from other parts of the U.K. Scotland and also Limerick in Ireland has done a very good job addressing this.

So, it is not an easy solution, and it has to go hand in hand with getting the criminals off the street and prosecuting them, and convicting them and then sentencing them for reasonable amounts of time. And this has also been a focus, that the sentencing guidelines really need to be looked at, because I think to most Americans, they would seem very, very lenient.

But I defer to my fellow Commissioner. Professor?

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. I agree. Mitchell has covered most of it. It does need a multiagency and multidisciplinary approach. And as you know, and anyone who has ever worked with government knows that they prefer to work in their own silos at times, tackling the problem from their point of view. And, so, health does not talk to the economic people or the folk that are dealing with education, and the folk that are dealing with justice.

And that is where our Commission comes in and recommending what we call a whole-of-government approach, which is really an integrated approach. And I think that the International Fund for Ireland is a very good example. Though it is not dealing with investment, it is dealing with the disadvantaged areas.

And where you feel, as is the case with other conflicts that I work in around the world, where people feel they have been left behind, they do not have aspirations, that they are politically homeless, then they take to the streets, because they have nothing to lose. We need to give them some sense that they have a lot to lose, but I do not want it just to be about prisons and police, that they are losing the possibility of getting a good job, of being well-trained, well-educated. And the point that I make in my statement is we cannot leave this to the police to do this alone.

Mr. PFLUGER. That is right.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. They will not succeed. And we cannot lock up potentially 17,000, which is the number that we have been given of paramilitaries. And this is not a prison problem, though for public interest those criminals and gangsters and coercive controllers, as I call them, should be locked up. But there are plenty of decent good people who want a stake in their future, and that is where the United States comes in, as it has done over the past three decades.

Mr. PFLUGER. Well, ma'am, thank you very much. And I appreciate both of you.

And quickly, I do have one more question: In the post-Brexit world, and for anybody that wants to add to this with my remaining 30 seconds, how can the United States help encourage the U.K. and the EU writ large, to prioritize easing those trade tensions that have resulted, you know, from the post-Brexit arrangements?

Ms. MORRICE. Do you want me to start? Well, first of all, they are working on trying to make, obviously, the arrangements much more flexible on the Protocol, and encouraging the EU to be exactly the same, more flexible on the Protocol, to let goods through and flow more easily. However, if Scotland was in the Protocol, those goods would be going through Scotland, and there would be far, far fewer checks on the borders.

But the second thing I think is not just to focus on trade. I think the EU and U.S. should get together on all these other issues as well. And I want to reiterate exactly what both have said about economic and socioeconomic issues. The disadvantaged areas need investment, need support. And working together, the United States and the EU could help do that. Thank you.

Mr. PFLUGER. Well, it looks as though I am out of time. I appreciate, again, the witnesses' answers on these important subjects.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I yield.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you very much, Representative.

The chair now recognizes the chairman of the Middle East Subcommittee, Chairman Deutch, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for this important hearing.

Until the formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in 1996, women were nearly absent from politics in the region. And in conflicts around the world today, we are still seeing underrepresentation of women in conflict prevention and resolution. Discriminatory power structures continue to inhibit women's full participation in peace-building processes and the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Given all of that, Professor McWilliams, let me start with you. Why was the inclusion of women in the Good Friday Agreement negotiations critical to its success? And what role do women play in conflict negotiations in Northern Ireland and Europe overall?

Ms. McWILLIAMS. Thank you for that question. And I am delighted that we have got today the U.N. Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. It came in in the year 2000. We existed in the 4 years prior to that, so we did not have it to back us up. So we had to fight our own way to the table.

And we had been around for 25 years before that, despite some of the leaders of the other political party saying, Did these women fall out of the sky? Of course, we did not. We got to the table by getting elected, which showed you the appetite for the civic society people to get women to the table.

We were a small party, but we had equal speaking rights and equal input. Had we not been at that table, there would have been no provisions on integrated education or shared housing, or the Civic Forum, and on resources for young people and community development. That is what sustains peace. That is what women do.

When women get to the table, they pay attention to the issue of inclusion. They ask, whose voices are not here? Who should we be talking to? Where are the gaps? And then we read these agreements and we say, does that sustain peace, by simply letting people out of prison? By reforming police and criminal justice, exceptionally important. By good governance arrangements and sharing power, incredibly important. Constitutional arrangements, No. 1, exceptionally important.

But sustaining peace? That takes hard work. As hard as the day I signed the agreement at the table, it has taken me another two decades to continue, along with all my other colleagues, to make it work. What helped us sustain peace? It was about those young people. It was about the questions you have just asked me in relation to economic and social investment. You do not often see those in peace agreements.

And that, I think if I had to go back to the table, and hindsight, is a great person to have at the table. I would have worked much harder to ensure that those proposals would have been there. But nonetheless, we have now got an opportunity to do that. And that is what women do.

And I am only involved now with women around the world, in Colombia and Middle East, and in lots and lots of very tough conflict situations. And I want to give a shout-out for the leadership that I have seen that women play, at risk to their own lives. And we have a program called Women and Communities in Transition in Northern Ireland, and they are standing up to the paramilitaries. They are saying, if you want to call me an informer, go right ahead, but I am going to work with the police in arresting these gangsters. They are not going to control my life. We know what it is like when we are controlled by men who abuse us in our own private lives, and they are not going to get away with it in their public lives.

So it is a combination of that learning and that thinking that women bring to the table. And sometimes they are not there, and as a result, we lose out on sustainable peace.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate that. I am going to join you in that shout-out to the courage and the insight and the wisdom and the passion brought to the table. I appreciate that very much.

Ms. MORRICE, the same question to you. And then also just to expand this, we worked to implement the strategy on women, peace, and security around the world. What lessons can we learn here?

Ms. MORRICE. Thank you very, very much for bringing that to me, because, first of all, which is in my notes there, I am a member of the Women in International Security, the Brussels branch of that, on the Advisory Committee. And they are doing very, very valuable work, obviously bringing together the top brass women—all too few still—together, and talking about these issues.

And certainly, we are trying to look much, much more into, instead of defense and security, also peace-building and conflict resolution, the longer-term approach. And that is exactly what Monica has said. You know, there are so many different aspects to this that are not looked at properly by NATO. You know, all this money that goes into defense and security, where is the sort of proportion that is the equivalent for peace-building? You know, that is so lacking.

I will give you a quick example. I was in Afghanistan. I was with a DUP member and a Sinn Féin member, and we were talking to rural leaders, if you like. And I tried talking about the role of women in conflict resolution, and I couldn't get any sort of reaction at all.

So at the break, I asked—it was Jeffrey Donaldson actually from the DUP who was with me as well. And I said to him, Look, this is impossible. Will you do my bit and I will do your bit? And he said, Yes. So we went back in, and he talked about the role of women in the peace negotiations. And really, the dynamic changed in the room. They listened to him. And I talked about decommissioning of paramilitary, et cetera.

And do you see that important point I am making? Men need to start pushing this agenda, and that is where it is going to help get somewhere. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Chairman, again, I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and thank the witnesses. Truly, truly appreciate your participation in it. Thanks.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Chairman. And I thank the witnesses. Those are very insightful responses.

The chair now recognizes for 5 minutes a member who has great personal experience in all issues Europe. Representative Wagner for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the chairman.

And I associate myself very strongly with the words that Ms. Morrice and Ms. McWilliams have just expressed. And I am grateful that we are having this hearing. I thank our witnesses, truly, for your tireless work to promote peace in Northern Ireland.

I think Congress has been honored to have played a role in this peace process, and I believe this body can continue to serve as a force for prosperity and dialog and mutual understanding.

Ms. McWilliams, what do you believe were the driving factors behind the uptick of violent rioting in Northern Ireland this past March and April? And how concerned are you that violence will

flare up again, as frustration continues to rise over Brexit implementation and some of the pandemic response efforts?

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Well, there was a range of reasons. It was not just one reason. And one I have already mentioned was the people—those in particular Loyalist communities feeling threatened by their identity. And obviously that sense of loss has been pushed politically by a number of the issues which have turned out to be technical issues and not political, though they are read as political.

And I do want to emphasize this point, that political leaders need to calm things down at these times, instead of, perhaps, as on some occasions where they were seen as standing back. And, so, those that did speak out—those voices needed to be heard.

Young people need to engage with their peers, and their youth workers came in and played a huge role engaging, walking the streets at night. And they had a great phone system and communication system to break down the rumors and the lies, and working closely with the police. Communication was key.

In other areas, we have discovered that it was—that some of the paramilitary leaders were encouraging the young people out, and where others were calling out standards of—double policing.

Mrs. WAGNER. And let me—

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. They felt the standards of policing were coming down on them.

Mrs. WAGNER. And let me followup on that.

Ambassador Reiss, you sit on that Independent Reporting Commission, which is tasked with bringing an end to the paramilitary activity and tackling organized crime in Northern Ireland. How do you assess the threat posed by the paramilitary groups to peace in Northern Ireland, and what more needs to be done to end the paramilitary activity?

Mr. REISS. Well, I think it is a persistent threat that I believe will outlast any settlement of Brexit. It waxes and wanes, depending on what is happening politically.

I think, on the loyalist paramilitary side, they are disconnected with any political representation, meaningful representation, unlike the Republican side.

And I think, also, there is just a general contextual issue that Protestants, generally, are fearful that they may be losing the future. And Brexit is a harbinger of that. There is concerns over whether they are being let go and the inattention by London. And, so, there is a general sense that maybe they do not own the future, that the future belongs to another sectarian group.

This is an amorphous feeling—it is hard to quantify, but I think that that it is real for a lot of these folks. And so, again, there needs to be a lot of things that are done. You have to get the criminal element off the street. You just cannot—

Mrs. WAGNER. Yes.

Mr. REISS [continuing]. Really do much else—without that first step. And there is a smaller—much smaller, in the 17,000 number, maybe 1,000 core members. These aren't paramilitaries. These are criminal groups. They engage in really—you know, child abuse, when they are going after young people with paramilitary style attacks, which is a euphemism.

So, there is a lot that needs to be done on the law-and-order side certainly; but, unless you also follow very closely with economic investment, educational issues, all the integrated approach that Monica just mentioned—

Mrs. WAGNER. Uh-huh.

Mr. REISS [continuing]. Somebody else will fill that vacuum with the criminal leaders. And it is difficult. I mean, it is—look, we do not solve those problems immediately in the United States either.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Could I add—

Mrs. WAGNER. But I would just—go ahead. Go ahead.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Could I add a note of caution here?

And obviously CNN and the world media pay attention when petrol bombs are being thrown at buses. What we needed to look at and what the U.S. is good at looking at are the hotspots where more of resilience took place.

There were lots and lots of areas where riots could have broken out and did not break out because the community investment had been there. The work with the police had been there. The youth workers knew exactly who to talk to on the other side. The sports teams came out and maintained their contact.

That needs to go on from now on, because we could be looking at a very hot summer with bonfires—

Mrs. WAGNER. Uh-huh.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS [continuing]. With unauthorized parades, and our usual summers where everyone else gets, like you do, to look forward to your summer, we start to dread ours at times like this.

But the positive note needs to be emphasized that there has been a lot of good work invested and, as Mitchell says, that there has been a paramilitary control that has gone on for too long.

But there are also those who went to prison, who are now known as ex-prisoners, and others who have walked away from all this, and are acting in a role of civic leadership. So we need to continue to talk to them, to talk to young people, and say to them, Don't do what we did. The future is not good, and—

Ms. MORRICE. Could I—

Ms. MCWILLIAMS [continuing]. That is the root of what is happening.

Ms. MORRICE. Could I come in?

Mr. KEATING. Go right ahead, briefly.

Mrs. WAGNER. Please, Ms. Morrice.

Ms. MORRICE. Just a very quick one again. In the area that I live, Down Bangor, writ large, there have been posters that have been put up on every—on every street corner and roundabout, which shows pictures—and I think I sent it to you in my notes—of the EU—of Mr. Sefcovic, the—Biden, Boris Johnson, and Michael Martin, and these faces, and underneath is written: Nobody is listening to us. Which one do I pick?

You know, this—I mean, this is them shouting, saying, you know, somebody listen, please. And really, Monica said it. We need to—we need to find ways that their voices can be heard.

Now, of course, in our days, you know, the wonderful David Ervines of the day, who spoke so importantly about—for his people, if you like, you know, there obviously—you know, there are elected representatives. There is the Billy Hutchinsons. There is people

like that, but how do we get to reach out to them? The Irish President spoke on the radio recently about the need to reach out, you know, and I think there could be a lot more being done by America to that end.

Mrs. WAGNER. Great. Well, thank you. My time has well expired. I appreciate the——

Mr. KEATING. Yes.

Mrs. WAGNER [continuing]. Chairman's indulgence, and I yield back. Thank you. Thank you all.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

The chair now recognizes committee member, but also the chair of the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue, Representative Jim Costa, for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I have enjoyed the perspective that our three witnesses have provided.

We have talked about the role of the United States, and I would like to drill down on that. But, to the last speaker, as the chair of the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue, we have a lot of dialog, as you might expect, with the members of the European Parliament. And, given where we are today, post Brexit, I would like better insight on where you think the European Union, and the Parliament and the Commission will play in terms of the changes taking place, and where would you like to see a greater focus on the part of our colleagues with the European Parliament and the Commission?

Ms. MORRICE. Shall I?

Mr. COSTA. Go ahead, Jane.

Ms. MORRICE. Yes, thank you. Thank you very, very much for that question, because that is exactly the direction I think the United States should be looking. And, specifically, the Parliament, the Commission, and the Council of Ministers. The Parliament, now their foreign affairs committee—and, by the way, I have sent this—the link to this to Michel Barnier, to Mr. Sefcovic, so that they can see that America is actually talking about these things.

And I am very, very sorry that Europe, the European Union, isn't doing something similar to what you are doing. I am not aware of this being done in Brussels.

So that is the first point. You know, if they could start—they are doing great things, but few people know about it. So a hearing like this——

Mr. COSTA. What should be their role?

Ms. MORRICE. They should work—you and they should work together to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland. You should be—first of all, having to fund things like integrated education and mixed housing and victim support.

And, second, opening up business in America and Europe for investment, because, do not forget, in trading arrangements, we are going to have—Northern Ireland, as a relative of the Protocol, is open to both markets. So isn't that the best place——

Mr. COSTA. Does not the EU law also provide supporting a framework for guaranteeing human rights, equality, and non-discrimination provisions of the Peace Accord? And obviously, there are a whole lot of issues embodied in that, from security checkpoints to the other elements of the single market, the custom union, the 300-mile border that has effectively disappeared.

How are things at the border these days, would you describe?

Ms. MORRICE. Well, certainly, the border in Ireland has been nonexistent, except for the ping on your mobile phone when you go across, and it is still the same. And that is hopefully the way it will be in that sanctioned Good Friday Agreement.

And I do not know whether, Monica, if you want to come in on sort of the justice issues with the——

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Yes. Yes. The free movement across the border would be impossible if there was not, because people live in the border towns, and they work on the other side.

And it was the EU, let us not forget, that was the single European market that opened up the border in my day. We used to be stopped at the border for hours and searched, and then, of course, the Army came in and had its Army towers, and you certainly knew when you were crossing the border. You would hardly know that today, and that was a result of both the peace agreement, and continued as a result of the European Single market.

But, in relation to the justice issues, people are confused here. We will remain as part of the Council of Europe, and, of course, the Council of Europe is where the European Convention on Human Rights comes into play.

But the concern is—and I mentioned it—that the U.K. Government is now reviewing that act, that was part of the Good Friday Agreement, which is the Human Rights Act, which we proposed should be incorporated into domestic law. And it was, and came into effect in the year 2000.

That is the very piece of legislation that is now being reviewed at Westminster, because there are those who do not want those convention rights. They see Europe as having too many rights and regulations that does not allow its own government to have freedom, and it has a great belief on this issue of sovereignty, and therefore, it should be able to decide by itself what rights to include.

Now, that would be a step back. That would be reverting on what was agreed, and so, that is the concern about the review of the Human Rights Act at Westminster, and the absence of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland, which would have incorporated the right to be British, Irish, or both. It is more of an aspiration, when it should have been a guarantee from the Good Friday Agreement, but it has never been incorporated into law. And that is what should be clarified in a Bill of Rights.

And, so, it is those extra rights that weren't in the European convention that was—that are in the peace agreement that have been left hanging out there, and have never been legislated on. So that is why——

Ms. MORRICE. Can I speak on that?

Ms. MCWILLIAMS [continuing]. It has become such a concern.

Ms. MORRICE. This is probably one of the most important things that has been overlooked and I would like to stress, and your help would be great in this.

Thanks to the Good Friday Agreement, we are, as Monica says, British, Irish, or both, which means every single citizen in Europe and Northern Ireland is entitled to be a European citizen. They do not have to be Irish. They can be British European as well.

So we have all the rights already, and we will always keep the rights that every European citizen has. And that is something that isn't talked about nearly enough, because it is such a huge advantage for us here.

Mr. COSTA. So, my time has expired, but, Chairman Keating, this is probably something that, in our future conversations with our colleagues and the European Parliament, we ought to put on as an agenda item in terms of their foreign policy committee and get their take on what their future participation is going to be on this important issue.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative. Thank you for your leadership on the Dialogue. Also, I agree with you. If you could schedule that on, I think, given the comments of the need for economic opportunity, cooperation, and resources, those kind of joint efforts would be important. So thank you for that suggestion. It would be great if you follow on up and did that.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Appreciate your work and your questions.

The chair now recognizes Representative Brad Schneider for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Chairman Keating, and I want to thank our witnesses for spending your time with us today and sharing your thoughts and perspectives.

One of the things that struck me in reading the testimony, then hearing the talk today, is, you know, the uncertainty, the anxiety about the future. Someone talked about owning the future. I guess—and maybe I will start with Ms. Morrice.

What does it mean, looking to the future, trying to find an inclusive future, how do we best do it? And what role might the United States play to best facilitate that?

Ms. MORRICE. That is definitely the million-dollar question, I think, you are going to struggle with the future. Exactly. This is—this is the issue of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland in the future, is the biggest question that we face here.

And, actually, while—while obviously the talk is about, you know, what—when there will be a referendum on a united Ireland, and that is what is helping to increase concerns among the unionist, loyalist community of increasing talk about this, the fact that—of a referendum even, and the fact that Brexit has made that debate much more open.

I think, where I come from on this, is seriously to put it into a new context, and I think Scotland holds the key to this, because, tomorrow, we are going to hear whether or not an overwhelming majority of people of Scotland want independence, and vote for the independent party there.

So, then, they will eventually get an independent referendum. And what happens when or if Scotland leaves? And, obviously, Scotland wants to join the European Union.

So think of Ireland in that context. Think much, much longer term, because whatever happens, Scotland—it is going to happen in Scotland first. And, so, if we see a Scotland leaving, that takes it out of the whole context of the binary choice, Ireland, United Ireland, chair of Ireland, et cetera, and think about Scotland, Ireland,

and Northern Ireland coming together in a customs union and a single market.

You know, is that not a much healthier approach to everything? It can bring in orange and green. It can bring in our culture, our traditions. And it changes the whole narrative. And I would love if that sort of conversation was much, much more vocal in our media. Let's get a new narrative.

Thank you. Hope that helps.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. And, maybe, I will turn next to Ambassador Reiss and your thoughts on the same question.

Mr. REISS. The question being what can United States do to help with the future of Northern Ireland?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. To give a faith in the future. I mean, you know, as I was listening, you were saying, you know, belief in the future, resistance to criminality. You know, if those are the choices, I want people looking to the future with, as you mentioned earlier, an optimism that the future holds bright prospects for them.

Mr. REISS. Well, I think that the United States showing that it cares about Northern Ireland, is invested in its future, perhaps personified by a special envoy chosen by the President, I think all of that reassures people about the future. They have confidence still in the United States.

Obviously, 40 million-plus Irish Americans, all the personal, traditional cultural ties, economic ties, are absolutely essential. So, I think it just provides a little bit of a safety net that people fear that they won't be let loose, that the United States will do the right thing, will make sure that it listens carefully to what people want, and can be an advocate not just in Belfast, but also in Dublin and London.

So I think that the United States, being visibly involved at this point, is something that is very important.

And I have to confess, after I left the position in 2007, I really thought that it was not needed. I thought that the political future could be charted solely by the leadership in Northern Ireland.

I was wrong. I think that, today, that there is a real need for the United States to bring its optimism, but also some ideas about how we can deal with some of the persistent challenges of the north. And I think that would be welcomed, not just in the north, but also by Dublin and by London.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Great. Thank you. And I apologize. I am out of time. Professor McWilliams, what I was going to ask you is what we could do to reinforce those anchors of resiliency or those—I think you said hotspots of resilience.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Yes. Well—

Mr. KEATING. Go ahead. You know, we have been pretty liberal.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. It has been a good record so far in terms of the International Fund for Ireland as shown in its published reports, and the Ireland Funds that also come from the U.S. They have invested in youth leadership and in peace leadership and peace builders. And that needs to continue, because the programs are often from year to year, and as soon as they start showing some success, they are stood down.

So it is really important to look at this in the longer-term basis, and sustaining those good projects. So the resilience is building in. That is always very important in terms of peace-building.

And civic society must be included in that dialog, because it does know much better sometimes than the politicians. They used to say in Northern Ireland, the people were ahead of the politicians on that one. They might say that sometimes in the United States. I do not know.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I was going to say that might be a shared principle—

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Yes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER [continuing]. Probably across the world.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Yes, yes. And I would think, on this issue of identity, you struggle with it too in the United States. We are not alone in that. German American, Cuban American, Irish American—Jane has added Ulster-Scots American—and there are multiple identities. And not just the binaries.

As you may know, in the Women's Coalition, we were very inclusive in relation to our identities. Some of the women were fed up and no longer wanted to identify with those binaries.

And, so, there is the point. Should we be having more of the discussion involving the United States and Americans? Those who have struggled with this issue are good at this discussion in relation to cultural identity.

The British identity of those who hold it dearly in Northern Ireland somehow now feel really threatened, either because of the potential referendum, or because of the—what they are referring to as a border on the Irish Sea,—so it is not just a focus on the economic question, even if I wish it was. It is a question of identity, how they see their future identity.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Sure.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. And that is why I think, if the U.S. have got people who are working on this very closely—and I have lived in the U.S. myself. I am a graduate of the University of Michigan—where I saw how identity issues were played out, as you are seeing too recently on your streets in relation to that very issue, about identity and your future identity and your stake in the community.

And during President Clinton's time, the President held a huge conference on economic investment. It might be useful to even think about holding a conference on this issue of cultural identity. And—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. It is a great point.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS [continuing]. Bring those individuals through Northern Ireland.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Well, thank you, Professor.

And, again, thanks to everyone for your very thoughtful response, and, Chairman, thank you for the extra time. I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

The chair now recognizes for 5 minutes the vice chair of our committee, Representative Spanberger.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our guests who are here today. I really appreciate you joining our subcommittee and bringing just your exceptional experience to inform this conversation.

And I do also just want to express my appreciation to Chair Keating and all of our witnesses today who have been framing this conversation that peace is not just something you reach, and then becomes a permanent State. It is something that requires continual focus, and it needs to be affirmed and reaffirmed.

And, so, I think, in this effort, it is incredibly important for the United States to be supportive and engaged, and, so, I am grateful for you spending time with us today.

Ms. Morrice, I do want to note that in your opening statement, when you spoke about a Celtic Union, much like the Benelux countries, I felt that was a very interesting comment to make. I had previously lived in one of the Benelux countries, and I think it is a pretty straightforward comparison that may be more broadly understood in terms of what it is that you have been speaking of.

And you also spoke, Ms. Morrice, about student exchanges and the Erasmus Program, and, so, I have a variety of things I wish to talk about, but that one struck me as really a personal, community-focused, person-to-person way of creating and affirming peace.

And so, Ms. Morrice, I was wondering if you could just speak a little bit more to your suggestion in that space of student exchanges for those who may be watching this hearing, and for my other colleagues participating.

Ms. MORRICE. Thank you very much. I certainly will.

First of all, to note that the incredibly important move by the Irish Government to keep Erasmus operational in Northern Ireland, and to fund it from that point of view while it has been taken away, being replaced by a different system, a curing system in the rest of the U.K., that is the No. 1 excellent, excellent opportunity.

Now, that means that—and, by the way, I was an Erasmus student in 1976 in France, but it was not Erasmus in the day. It was EU funded. And my—30 years later, my son was the same in France as well. So, it is this hugely valuable—one of the best tools the European Union has, in fact, to promote interchange, cultural interchange.

So normally, it means students going and living either anywhere in the European Union for a year, or even they can go abroad, America, Japan. People have done it. So that is a vital way of discovering a new culture, a new country.

But my suggestion here—and thank you for bringing it up—is that actually Ireland operates, if you like, a mini internal Erasmus, and starts offering places for northern students down south for a year, and southern students up north for a year. And, you know—and, I mean, maybe there will be some Erasmus students who say, No, I want to go to the south of France or somewhere.

But, honestly, if you think—if you think in terms of the island, that would be a very, very healthy way of people—of the getting to know you better, which is vital in the north-south siege, I believe.

By the way, I would also—before I left Brussels, I was a member of the European Economic and Social Committee, which is the civic form of Europe. And, in that, I suggested the European Parliament propose free transport for pensioners throughout Europe.

There are certain countries—certain countries, like Luxembourg, already do free transport for pensioners, but to have that Europe-

wide, wouldn't that be an exceptional way of bringing—of letting older folk, who desperately need minds opened—you know, not all, of course—but, you know, what a wonderful way of getting exchange if you had free transport. And I think that would include Northern Ireland, too.

So they are a bit of ideas, but I love getting the opportunity to put them out there. Thank you very much.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much.

I find this so fascinating, because, particularly with students in student exchange, it provides such an opportunity to uncover and understand that sometimes, the differences that might create tensions are, in fact, not nearly as profound as we may have thought.

And so, to continue on my next question, I will direct it again toward you, Ms. Morrice, or toward Professor McWilliams. Focus on engaging underrepresented communities. I know this was really central to the work that you all did with the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. And so I am curious, can you discuss a little bit the importance of this type of engagement for maintaining and strengthening peace? And how do these efforts, in your view and experience, prevent violence? And, also, simultaneously strengthen democratic institutions?

Ms. MORRICE. Do you want to start, or shall I, Monica?

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Go ahead, Jane.

Ms. MORRICE. Well, first of all, by the way, something I left out in my original answer to your question was Cooperation Ireland is doing a lot of work in that, and I always like to give a bit of a shout-out to certain people or things who are doing good work in this area. So that is a very valuable one.

Now, the question you are saying is underrepresented communities. Well, I suppose—I suppose I will talk about women, because that is the one I certainly—we certainly have experience of. And, you know, I do—I am a firm believer, if we have got 50–50, where it should be, in all levels of decisionmaking, and the public and private sector, you know, that does get balanced. It is so simple to recognize, and I cannot see why it isn't understood.

Now, positive discrimination might be a step too far, but even things like gender pay, that pay balance.

And, by the way, here is going to be a very important one in this that I do not think anybody has been properly looking at. There is a huge gender pay gap, right, and you are talking 20 percent Europe-wide.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Uh-huh.

Ms. MORRICE. And you are—but, now, if there is a gender pay gap right now, what is the female pensioner pay gap going to be like?

Now, that is going to feed into pensions, which is going to make pensioners far, far worse off in the future than their male counterparts. And that is something I think needs to—now, excuse me. I have to declare an interest in that area.

But there you are. There is my—it probably was not the ones you were initially thinking of in Northern Ireland—

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Could I respond by saying that we do have very strong legislation in relation to fair employment, and the Good Friday Agreement introduced a particular piece into the legislation,

known as section 75, which pays attention to the issue of underrepresentation.

There is some controversy over whether or not it is paid sufficient attention in relation to areas that have been disinvested, or haven't had sufficient investment, and particularly, west of the Bann, which, in Northern Ireland terms, predominantly Catholic areas are west of the Bann, and they would argue that they are grossly underrepresented in terms of the new jobs, and in terms of the issue of equality. So that does raise its head.

The other issue for us, like you, is the issue of race, and what Northern Ireland was opening up to prior to Brexit were the European communities. We had a very large Polish community in Northern Ireland, and Portuguese and many others came to work in Northern Ireland. Many of them have now returned because of Brexit.

But we have an increasing number of ethnic minorities who resent the fact that we continue to talk about Protestant and Catholic only in terms of underrepresentation. So that is an issue that is also paid attention to now in terms of policing those communities, as you too have recently had experience of confronting in the United States.

And, so, the issue of inclusion is key to peacemaking in terms of all of those identities, ethnic and gender and sexual orientation, as well as religion. But our focus, as you have guessed in terms of this conversation today, has been predominantly on political identity, and on religion, the largest part of our peace-building. And it shows you that it is a good sign of peace, that we have become much more inclusive of those other identities.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much to the witnesses.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you vice chair.

And, unanimous consent, we would like to just have a second round of 3-minute questions just as followups. I will go first just with one question that was both—that was mentioned in two of the witnesses' written testimony that I just want to explore more. And that is, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was credited with the inclusion of civic forums in the Good Friday Agreement.

And, you know, what is the importance of reinstating these forums after they were disbanded shortly after the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly? Can you touch upon the importance of that and how it could possibly be reinstated?

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Yes. The civic forum, we put into the Good Friday Agreement because we were very aware that there may be some political instability as the government's arrangements came into place. And that—sometimes it is really important to put social and economic and cultural issues into another body, as an advisory body to the legislative assembly. Not that it would be totally representative, because it was not elected, but that it would be able to sit alongside the Assembly in those years as representatives of civil society.

And, indeed, it did. It was established, but only for a short time, because the political parties told me—and if they were saying it to me, they were saying it to the other parties—we are now in place here. We do not need a civic forum.

Now, that was quite a shock and an indictment at a time when we were building peace. Of course, you needed a civic forum and sensible civic dialog from business leaders, trade unionists, farmers, the victims sector and, those who have been to prison along with—the youth sector, the women's sector and, the children's sector.

We had designated all the different types of sectors that would be prepared voluntarily to step forward and give their leadership to the civic forum, and indeed they did, but it was stood down. The Assembly collapsed four times during my period as an elected member. And the first time it did, the civic forum got nowhere after that. And eventually it just disappeared, because there was not the investment in keeping it going.

And it seems to me a very easy resource. It is not expensive. People volunteer. And those business leaders and others in civic society, community leaders in particular, are saying it would be good to hear our voices at this time, particularly now, and—with all of the controversy and contestation over the leaving of Europe. And, so, that is why I suggested that it would be really important to re-insert it.

And, second, as Tip O'Neill used to say, all politics is local. And if all politics is local, we should actually have a trickle-down effect to district council levels and where the disturbances are happening at the local level.

And so, again, a proposal might be to have district council civic forums where local people, local business leaders and others can come forward and take testimony, as you are doing today, invite experts to give accurate information before these riots break out, and before they wait for disturbances to happen before they react, to act as a sort of proactive peace-building mechanism, and that is why I proposed it to put in my statement today.

Ms. MORRICE. Should I comment?

Mr. KEATING. Ms. Morrice, yes.

Ms. MORRICE. Thank you. Yes, indeed. This is excellent, because it is a very important part of the Good Friday—I mean, we are talking here about the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and the civic forum is one of the bits of the Good Friday Agreement, isn't implemented. So it should—it should be back up and running.

I, as a member of the European Economic and Social Committee, if you like, that was the civic forum of Europe. There were 350 of us from trade unions, business, consumers, farmers, women's groups, youth groups, all sitting together and actually giving our opinions on all pieces of European legislation. And it works very well in that it does not have a veto. We do not have—we wouldn't have a veto.

But we feed into the decisionmaking process, so the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, all receive our opinions on a certain piece of legislation, and they take it on board. And, if they want—but they are probably advised to because of the publicity and the support they would get if they take on board the work of the civic forum.

So that would be exactly what—how it would work in Northern Ireland. And, you see, it takes—it takes the politics out of decision-

making, if you like, in the civic forum. So, people are working simply on the impact on an economic, social, or cultural level. And that really is desperately needed in Northern Ireland.

You know, if you can have farmers arguing with consumers about prices and things like that, it is a much healthier argument. And that is what we should definitely have. And the United States really insisting on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement with that one would be excellent. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Yes. Thank you. I wanted to highlight—that was in your written testimony, and I thought it was an important way to try and maybe break down some of the division, because some of the division, I think, is more political than maybe exists with a majority of the public, so—

Ms. MORRICE. Yes.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. I just wanted to highlight that. Thank you.

If Vice Chair Spanberger or Rep Jim Costa have a second-round question, I will recognize them at this time.

Vice Chair Spanberger?

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for allowing us a second round with your time.

So, my question is about U.S. engagement, and, you know, notably, one of the steps that the Biden Administration may consider is the appointment of a U.S. special envoy for Northern Ireland.

Ambassador Reiss, I will direct this question to you. What do you think President Biden should keep in mind as he considers whether to appoint an envoy? And, if so, how to select the appropriate person?

Mr. REISS. Well, I think that the President needs to confer with Secretary of State Blinken and choose somebody who has the time, the energy, and the passion to commit to this issue. It cannot be an afterthought. It cannot be a third or fourth job.

And I think somebody who is going to have an open mind; somebody who is going to be seen as an honest broker by all the parties, especially across the sectarian divide in the north; and somebody who will have access to the Secretary of State and to the President as needed.

It is tempting, of course, to present it to a political donor, and there may be some that actually fit those qualifications. But I think that, given where Northern Ireland is now, what the challenges are, and the potential positive role the United States can perform, I think it would be well advised to give it to somebody who understands the issues, the key players, and has a positive sense of what the United States can achieve.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you.

I am smiling, because I think that so many of the comments, particularly about the focus, the experience, the recognition of, and the knowledge of who the key players are is important. And certainly I think those who have spent a career in the Foreign Service, or in the service to our diplomatic priorities have a particular experience that is valued.

Professor McWilliams and Ms. Morrice, in my remaining moments, I am curious if you would have any thoughts about, if there

were a special envoy, how that individual could support or complement the local efforts to reaffirm peace and build tolerance and prosperity ultimately?

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. Well, it is—I think it is crucial at this time, and that person then has the ear of both the Congress, and, indeed, if it was the President's envoy, likewise. And it would build confidence, I think, in us ourselves back here that we have that conduit.

I want to pay tribute here to the U.S. consul in Belfast, and to the consulars that we have had over the years, who have been first class. And I know them all, and they have done such a great job in terms of the service they have given us. But that person, as you know, comes and goes.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Right.

Ms. MCWILLIAMS. And what we need now is the continuity. We have missed having an envoy for some time now, and, perhaps, Mitchell was right in that there was a time when we needed to be weaned off envoys. I used to say to Senator Mitchell, It is time we are on solids now.

And it would be nice to think that we—one day soon we might be on solids, but we are not there yet. And that is why the U.S. envoy is so important to us.

Ms. MORRICE. Could I just say that I think it is actually part of a demonstration of the U.S. commitment to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. So that is important. But, at a practical level, obviously it opens up more, and gets the chains of engagement and communication. Definitely, it is—it would be a very valuable thing, and I unfortunately did not put it into mine, but I will certainly add my voice to that.

But I would also like to pay tribute to—and obviously we have talked about the Clintons, the role played by the Clintons, both for women in Northern Ireland and for peace in Northern Ireland. It is hugely important.

But I also want to mention Obama, and his support for integrated education, when he came over here was very, very important.

And then, I want to come to someone else, Nancy Pelosi. It was excellent that she came here and that she—we met her and we talked about, and she listened. And finding out more about us is exactly what an envoy would ensure happens, much, much more coming and going of these people, which is very good.

And last, but not least, I would admit, obviously Biden, the fact that he is already talking about the Good Friday Agreement at the early stages, and he knows the stuff so well.

But can I put in a plug, please? Could we make sure that on his first visit to Ireland, which I am assuming is going to be very soon, next year maybe, COVID permitting, but that he comes north of the border. That would be a big, big, important gesture.

And two things: One, that he, like other Presidents who have come before, visits an integrated school. That gives a very important message; and, second, launches this wonderful new musical *On Eagles Wings*, the Ulster-Scots tradition.

Now, would that—would those be wonderful things for President Biden to do when he gets here, and thank him for committing to the Good Friday Agreement.

Mr. REISS. Excuse me. I do not want to take anything away from all the Democratic politicians that were cited, but I think, in the—in the interest of fairness, that perhaps there were a few Republican Presidents and Republican Members of Congress, and just Republican citizens that actually had something to do with advancing the peace process over the years.

Ms. MORRICE. I agree. Thank you very much for reminding me.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you for reviewing that bit of bipartisanship back in the committee, Mr. Ambassador, and I appreciate the answers from all of our witnesses.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you. And I—I will let go the fact that serving with someone like Peter King, a former colleague of mine and friend, certainly played an important role as well.

Representative Costa, do you have any—30—you have 3 minutes, if you would like, for a second round of questioning?

Mr. COSTA. Well, just quickly. I commend my colleague, Congresswoman Spanberger, for asking the question in terms of an envoy, and I think that both Peter King, a list of our Republican colleagues who have taken an active role, as well as our Democratic Members—I have absolute faith that President Biden, given all of his past involvement on these issues, is going to choose an envoy that clearly reflects someone who has the skill sets necessary to represent the administration. I think he takes this area—this issue very seriously, as does Speaker Pelosi. Her comments in April of last year as it relates to the Good Friday Agreement, I think, are well-stated.

Just let me quickly ask you: Do you think that getting back to the EU role, that the Commission should appoint such an envoy representing the EU?

Ms. MORRICE. Well, by the way, I was that person. The European Commission has offices, representations they are called, in every member State. And, in terms of the larger member States, it is not only in the capital, but it is also in the regions. They had—in the U.K. There was one in Belfast, Edinburgh, and Cardiff, as well as London.

And I was the representative for 7 years in the EC's office in Belfast. And, yes, I am awfully glad you raised that. There is still someone here, but obviously there is—it is a different role now, because it is no longer a representative instrument. It is more like an embassy or something.

So it is different, and I—you are absolutely right. I think that they should go back to there being—back to the representation we had, because that was huge. But, when I was in the office in Belfast, that was the first peace program.

And, by the way, there is one name we haven't mentioned yet. John Hume. You know, the role of John Hume in bringing both America and Europe together. And those days—this is the early 1990's. I was there from 1992 to 1997. And John Hume was instrumental in bringing about the European peace program—

Mr. COSTA. Yes. That is true.

Ms. MORRICE [continuing]. And working with my office. And, of course—so, yes, we should reinstate it. But there is a slight problem in that there is even a debate or argument or controversy—I do not know what the right word is—about whether—or if there is an EC office in Northern Ireland, where it should be situated. Should it be in central Belfast, or should it be at the border? There is—I do not know where they are with that, but——

Mr. COSTA. Yes.

Ms. MORRICE [continuing]. Certainly should be.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you.

Ms. MORRICE. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

Mr. COSTA. I heard that you held that position. Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the subcommittee.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

And thank you for bringing the name John Hume forward to be recognized, as well as the colleagues I worked with in my time here, Peter King.

I also want to ask unanimous consent. Chairman Richie Neal is chairing a Ways and Means hearing that occurred simultaneously with this, and he did submit a statement, and I am asking unanimous consent that that be placed on the record, the official record for this hearing, and I want to recognize him and thank him for all his work as well.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Neal follows:]

RICHARD E. NEAL
FIRST DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS



CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
DEAN
MASSACHUSETTS AND
NEW ENGLAND CONGRESSIONAL
DELEGATIONS
DEMOCRATIC LEADER
FRIENDS OF IRELAND CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Richard E. Neal
Statement for the Record
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, Environment, and Cyber
Wednesday, May 5, 2011

Good Morning. I'm Congressman Richard E. Neal, Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, and Co-Chairman of the bipartisan Friends of Ireland Committee in the United States Congress. Given the importance of the subject matter, I would have liked to join you virtually today, but I am simultaneously hosting a meeting of the Ways and Means Committee on our efforts to strengthen retirement security. But I welcome the opportunity to submit brief opening remarks for the record.

Let me first thank my friend Chairman Keating for organizing this timely and important hearing of the Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber. Like many of you, I continue to believe the Good Friday Agreement, of which America is a guarantor, is the only blueprint for lasting peace and stability on the island of Ireland. There simply is no Plan B. This view is shared by President Biden and both the British and Irish governments. This ground breaking political settlement remains a model of successful conflict resolution around the globe. An unprecedented referendum was held in 1998, and the vast majority of people on both sides of the Irish border voted for the agreement's implementation. After years of direct rule from London, power was devolved to democratic institutions in Belfast, and local officials elected on cross community basis were now required to make decisions about their future. A society in conflict had been transformed and the course of modern Irish history changed forever.

However, in the past five years the integrity of that historic peace accord has been threatened by a range of issues including Brexit. In 2019, I travelled to London and Dublin with Speaker Nancy Pelosi to send a strong message that there would be no U.S. – U.K. trade deal if there was a return to a hard border or if the Good Friday Agreement was not honored. My position on these issues has not and will not change. There can be no backsliding at this crucial point. And my colleagues in the bipartisan Friends of Ireland Caucus have been equally clear, consistent and emphatic. But there is a small minority on the island that wants to ignore this historic achievement and attempt to bring back the past. We must not let them. This past month, orchestrated violence returned to the streets of Northern Ireland which I condemned in the strongest possible terms. Twenty three years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, differences must be resolved through the crucible of politics, not by sectarian acts of violence.

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That is why today's hearing by Chairman Keating and the members of the Subcommittee is so important. We all want to see peaceful, prosperous and shared future for the people of the north. Here in the United States, Irish America wants to continue to play a meaningful role to ensure that all aspects of that international accord are implemented in full. We want to sustain and nurture the peace process. And we stand ready to work with our friends and colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic to make that possible. Let's reiterate our support for the Good Friday Agreement and strengthen the special thread that binds us together going forward.

Finally, let me recognize the three excellent witness who are participating in this discussion today. I have had the privilege of working with Monica McWilliams, Mitchell Reiss and Jane Morrice for many years. The tireless effort they have made to bring peace and reconciliation to the island of Ireland is truly remarkable. I am certain their considerable knowledge and insight will be appreciated by the members. I hope to see them in person so once we get past the pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Just a couple of closing comments that are important. No. 1, I have noticed both Professor McWilliams and Ms. Morrice are wearing the colors of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and so, that did not go unnoticed, and I want to thank you. It is a symbol of your continued commitment to that cause.

Ambassador, thank you for your comments. This is a terrific—we couldn't ask for a better panel to discuss these issues, and your insight is incredibly important. All three of you, thank you for doing that.

I think I made it clear, you know, that, even as a person with Irish heritage—my grandparents emigrated from Ireland to the U.S. I am speaking as an American, however, when I want to just point to the fact there is great pride in what the U.S. had accomplished here. It goes unsaid. Even when we go to other parts of the world, other leaders in conflict will bring this up as a symbol that, when hope seems hopeless, that the real challenge of peace can be met, and they point to the Good Friday Agreement all the time, all over the world, as an example of what can be overcome.

And it gives me enormous pride as an American that we are part of that, and we were a part of that, and we should be part of it until all the commitment is met going forward to that agreement.

Brexit has caused its difficulties, as we anticipated, but I hope that the Protocol is adhered to and, we can move forward with this. There is some excellent suggestions by our witnesses today how to do that. And we—and also, a reinforcement that, even prior to Brexit, there was unfinished work to be done, and we could see some of the cracks in the agreement coming forth.

And, we have to make sure that not only this is a commitment to an agreement that was important for peace with Northern Ireland, with U.K., with Ireland, with all of Europe, but the U.S., as a principal member of this as well, for work that is undone.

So it remains a priority with me. It remains a priority—a bipartisan priority with this committee, and the full committee, as well as Congress. This is a unifying issue for Congress on both sides of the aisle.

And I will just finish with one of your suggestions, as I took to heart. I will be circulating a letter among colleagues, if they choose to join me, formally asking the President to appoint a special envoy to Northern Ireland, and take, you know, the information we had from you to heart and bring it forward.

So thank you again. This was just a terrific panel, a very important hearing, and one that I think we will have a lot of followup on.

With that, I will have to do a little homework, and say members of the committee will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous material, and questions for the record subject to the length limitation of the rules.

And, with that, I move that this hearing be adjourned, and thank you again.

[Whereupon, at 12:55p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber

William R. Keating (D-MA), Chair

May 5, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber via Cisco WebEx (and available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

DATE: Wednesday, May 5, 2021

TIME: 11:00 a.m., EDT

SUBJECT: Reaffirming the Good Friday Agreement

WITNESS: Professor Monica McWilliams
Emeritus Professor at Ulster University's Transitional Justice Initiative
Commissioner for the Independent Reporting Commission
Former Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, former Member of the Legislative Assembly of Northern Ireland, co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and signatory to the Good Friday Agreement

Ms. Jane Morrice
Member of the Board of Governors
Integrated Education Fund
Former Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, former Head of the European Commission Office in Northern Ireland, and former co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

The Honorable Mitchell Reiss
Commissioner for the Independent Reporting Commission
Former United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland

By Direction of the Chair

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber HEARING

Day Wednesday Date 05/05/2021 Room Cisco Webex

Starting Time 11:06 Ending Time 12:55

Recesses ☐ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

William R. Keating

Check all of the following that apply:

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TITLE OF HEARING:

Reaffirming the Good Friday Agreement

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See Attached

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

Professor Monica McWilliams' Testimony

Ms. Jane Morrice's Testimony

Ambassador Mitchell Reiss' Testimony

Representative William R. Keating's Statement for the Record

Representative Dina Titus' QFR for Ms. Monica McWilliams

Representative Dina Titus' QFR for Ms. Jane Morrice

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 12:55

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Note: If listing additional witnesses not included on hearing notice, be sure to include title, agency, etc.

Benjamin Cooper
Subcommittee Staff Associate

WHEN COMPLETED: Please print for subcommittee staff director's signature and make at least one copy of the signed form. A signed copy is to be included with the hearing/markup transcript when ready for printing along with a copy of the final meeting notice (both will go into the appendix). The signed original, with a copy of the final meeting notice attached, goes to full committee. An electronic copy of this PDF file may be saved to your hearing folder, if desired.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
EUROPE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND CYBER SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Questions for the Record from Congresswoman Dina Titus (NV-01)
 Reaffirming the Good Friday Agreement
 HFAC Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber Subcommittee
 Wednesday, May 5th, 2021

Questions for the Record Submitted to Professor Monica McWilliams
 Rep. Dina Titus
 Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber Subcommittee
 05/05/2021

Question 1:

Until the formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, women were nearly absent from politics in the region. During the peace negotiation process, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition held two of the twenty seats and, as organization that included both Protestants and Catholics focused heavily on implementation of the agreed upon values in the peace process. Why was the inclusion of women in the peace negotiations critical to its success?

Answer:

The first thing to note is the Women's Coalition insistence on developing and maintaining an inclusive process for peace negotiations and the implementation of the peace agreement. When a transitional space opened up after the Republican and Loyalist ceasefires which set the scene for peace negotiations in 1996, it provided the impetus for women to come together to form a political party so as to get elected to the multi-party negotiations. With its roots in civil society, it added issues that would not otherwise have been on the agenda at the peace negotiations. We were present as elected representatives to the peace talks which meant that the Women's Coalition was able to exert autonomy and engage as peace negotiators in our own right.

The Women's Coalition was engaged in formal Track One high level negotiations two years prior to UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. When the Security Council Resolution was tabled at the UN we argued the following points: first, the importance of women's presence to bringing the voices of civil society into a peace process, to test the public thermometer for political accommodation, to dismantle rumours and to maintain dialogue at times of crisis, to act as the eyes, ears, and consciences of the communities from which the combatants had come and to which they would return. Second, women play a key role in the deliberation of peace negotiations –focusing on outcomes in relation to children and young people; third, women have specific needs which also need to be addressed during and after conflict including the decommissioning weapons in terms of gender based violence; fourth, emphasizing women's specific expertise and their role as role models in negotiations and mediation.

In terms of building a framework for sustainable peace, we inserted the following proposals: the establishment of a civic forum that would act in an advisory capacity to the legislative Assembly on economic, social and cultural issues; the needs of victims; integrated education and shared housing; provision for young people affected by the Troubles, including the development of special community-based initiatives based on international best practice. In

addition, we focused on human rights and equality issues, inserting into the final agreement the right of women to full and equal political participation. The Women's Coalition showed the importance of a process of inclusion, having a comprehensive agenda for sustainable peace and the need to implement what has been agreed.

Question 2:

In late March and early April of this year, Northern Ireland experienced increasing tension and violence on the streets where the majority of those upsetting the peace were younger individuals who have been disproportionately impacted by strict COVID-19 lockdowns. One image continually seen around the world was a firebombed bus being pelted by rocks. As many reports noted before attacking the bus, however the perpetrators ensured no one was on board. In some of the clips from the incidents, there were many older individuals encouraging the acts of violence but not participating themselves. What are the root causes pushing some youth in Northern Ireland to the streets to take part in conflict? Do you think they understand the true ramifications of increasing tensions?

Answer:

In relation to the recent disturbances, a range of issues are involved. The issue of the peace dividend not being seen to benefit low income communities where young people in particular have few aspirations about their future and have experienced long term unemployment, along with underachievement in education, drug and alcohol addiction, which heightens the potential for them to be recruited into criminal gangs associated with former paramilitaries. What has euphemistically become known as 'recreational rioting' – arising out of boredom was increased during the COVID lockdown. The use of social media was also a problem – with fake accounts being set up to spread information about the rendez-vous points and to assist with gathering young people from outside the areas. The police are aware of this and try not to heighten tensions by making arrests but instead harvest the information from CCTV cameras and police surveillance. Those who are arrested, if aged under 18 years, are followed up by a formal mechanism, the Youth Justice Conferences, as a diversionary process from prison. Restorative Justice projects are also employed. The more serious offences lead to prosecutions and/or getting committed to a youth justice centre. Those aged between 18 and 21 years may be sentenced to the young men's prison at Hydebank but to avoid this outcome, youth workers and community leaders are centrally engaged beforehand working hard to keep these young people out of trouble. The International Fund For Ireland has played a central role in this work. Many young people do not understand the ramifications of getting involved in these disturbances. When they broke the law by getting involved in riots at the City Hall and elsewhere, over a decision about the display of the Union Jack flag on council premises, some of these young people ended up with criminal convictions which in turn affected their future employment prospects. Community leaders, including ex-combatants from former paramilitary organizations, drew on the lessons from that to persuade young people to step back from the current situation.

Question 3:

If these rising tensions do not subside, do you believe some in the older generation, who experienced “The Troubles”, may again turn to actions instead of words to voice their displeasure with the downturn in the economy as a result of Brexit restrictions and the pandemic?

Answer:

There is the potential for that to happen but a great deal of work has been invested to ensure that is not the outcome. There are also those in the older generation actively engaged in the transition process and are working to ensure there is no return to the past. Where the danger lies is with those engaged in criminal activity who use their badge of allegiance to the former paramilitary groups on the loyalist side to push the pro-Union case. There are also those on the unionist/loyalist side who are against the Good Friday Agreement and use the fall out from Brexit to add to their grievances. Flute bands, some of which are affiliated to the Orange Order, are now engaged in unauthorized parades. They have the potential to cause serious disruption over the coming months. They have been pictured marching through town centers, with individuals wearing balaclavas and facemasks to avoid detection by the police. Those on the pro-Union side who are confronting the police accuse the police of double standards, arguing that a funeral last summer of a former IRA man was allowed to hold a mass gathering during the COVID lock down whilst they are being held liable for organizing unauthorized gatherings.

It is also worth noting that there are many areas where disturbances did not occur – showing increased resilience within these communities towards those asking young people to engage in public disorder. If an attempt is made to spread the protests across the country, limited police resources could be challenged. The annual event, Twelfth of July Parades, is normally accompanied by bonfires that have been previously regulated by local district councils. There is a good deal of conflict mediation taking place to avoid more public disorder over this period.

Questions for the Record from Congresswoman Dina Titus (NV-01)
Reaffirming the Good Friday Agreement
HFAC Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber Subcommittee
Wednesday, May 5th, 2021

Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Jane Morrice
Rep. Dina Titus
Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber Subcommittee
05/05/2021

Question 1:

How did you advocate for the rights of women to be included in the document framework for the final peace agreement and how can we see the legacy of those key inclusionary actions today? Additionally, as we look towards resolving other regional global conflicts, how can we ensure the critical viewpoints of women are included?

Answer:

Ms. Morrice did not respond in time for printing.

Question 2:

In an interview in 2019, you said the EU had provided a space for Irish and British people to meet and work together and that space is now being removed by Brexit. Can you expand on the impact this has on future relations between Ireland and the UK?

Answer:

Ms. Morrice did not respond in time for printing.

Question 3:

Do you believe the recent backlash and anger towards the implementation of the Brexit agreement could potentially lead to enough support for a referendum on Northern Ireland's future in the UK or a reunification with Ireland?

Answer:

Ms. Morrice did not respond in time for printing.