

northern IRELAND

Ms Doreen Brown
Central Secretariat
Parliament Buildings
Stormont BT4 3SS
Belfast

24th June 1998

Doreen

VITAL VOICES - WOMEN IN DEMOCRACY

1. I have now attended two discussions in State Department about this. The first, a rather unwieldy affair, took place last week and was chaired by Theresa Loar. It included representatives from the National Democratic Institute; the US Departments of Labour and Commerce (Virginia Manuel); USIA; NSC (Larry Butler); the Office of the First Lady; Katherine Koch from Jim Lyon's office and the Irish Embassy. The discussion which was inconclusive ranged far and wide. Much talk but no clear outcomes.
2. Today I took part in a smaller meeting over lunch at State. This consisted of Liz Toohey from the US Department of Labour; Carmen Suro-Bredie, US Trade Representatives Office (and DC supporter of the NIWC), Rosemary O'Neill (State Department and daughter of a former Speaker of the House of Representatives) and Alyce Nelson, Assistant to Theresa Loar and the main conference organiser. (She and Loar were in Northern Ireland earlier this month. My note of 1st June and our subsequent telephone call refers).
3. This was a more substantial discussion about what the conference should aim to achieve and be. The consensus which seemed to be emerging was that it would be part issue raising and part skill/knowledge development to help women in Northern Ireland play a more central role in life there - right across the board. Confidence building was recognised as a key area - how to help women move from being highly effective at the community

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level to the political mainstream. That immediately raised the question - how could their voices be heard if in practice the new Assembly contained very few women? What other platforms are there and how to ensure women have access to them? There may be new political institutions being created in Northern Ireland, but how can women be part of them? A key message must be that - it will take men and women to build a new Northern Ireland, not just the former.

4. There was a lengthy debate about the structure of the conference and how to identify key speakers and workshop leaders. Is the Vienna structure a direct fit for Northern Ireland? Many of the suggested workshop topics are not immediately relevant to women's issues there.

5. There was also the inevitable discussion about whether the conference should be confined to women's voices in Northern Ireland or include, say, the ROI border counties as the 1995 Washington Investment Conference had done. I pitched hard for an exclusively Northern Ireland focus, although obviously there would be women delegates attending from the ROI and beyond. But the vast bulk of the violence had occurred within Northern Ireland and it was there that women had most forcefully emerged as effective community leaders. This had been recognised by Mrs Clinton when she met the late Joyce McCartan in 1995 and subsequently in her contact with the NIWC. Northern Ireland was the epicentre of change in Ireland and it was there that women's voices were probably least in evidence.

6. Rosemary O'Neill thought the Irish American community would be less enthusiastic about a solely Northern Ireland conference. [I'm not sure if this was a hint that this would be an important factor for The White House]. I pointed out that the IFI for instance already recognised Northern Ireland's special circumstances by directing the bulk of its funding there. No firm decision was reached on this. Loar and Nelson and The White House will make their own judgement but I suspect Irish-American pressure will be applied to try to make the meeting cross border.

7. This was very much a round table brain storming session and although again no specific conclusions were reached (or at least articulated by Nelson), but it will have moved the planning process along. I have a direct line now to Alyse Nelson and I would urge you to let me have any ideas or reservations about the conference (particularly on para 6 above) so that I

might feed these to her. We have an opportunity to make an input to the planning, if we so wish.

8. I enclose some conference planning papers. These are an amalgam of the structure of the Vienna conference and the issues and ideas put to Nelson and Loar when they were in Belfast recently. They should not be viewed as an immutable template or the final shape of the event. (There was widespread agreement for instance that some of the suggested work shop topics would not be appropriate). The only real certainty for now is that Mrs Clinton will attend. The dates aired today were 1 - 3 September. These are probably not movable as they are based on her availability but is there any reason to think they would be disastrous for us?

9. Can you please forward this to other relevant parties - presumably Francine O'Neill in DED would have an interest?

*Yours,
Janet.*

Janet McIver
Northern Ireland Bureau

Copy to: Peter Smyth, NIB
Anthony Cary, Chancery

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 11, 1998

To: Theresa Loar
Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues

From: Blair Hall 
Embassy London

Subject: Vital Voices: Northern Ireland Agreement Provisions Relevant to Women

Overall, the 'Good Friday' Agreement has the potential to enhance the position of women in Northern Ireland even though that was not a specific focus of the negotiations. There are few guarantees, however, and much depends on developing the political will to include gender equality at the heart of the agenda. This suggests an obvious conference goal.

Implementation of the Agreement's central political, constitutional and security arrangements is likely to remain contentious for some time, with Protestants/Unionists and Catholics/Nationalists continuing to disagree on key issues and interpretations. At the same time, there appears to be a more broad-based consensus on the Agreement's economic, social and cultural aspects. Therefore, we probably will do best if we disaggregate those elements specifically relevant to women from the overarching implementation issues. The idea is to move gender issues to a more central position in the debate of new arrangements in Northern Ireland while avoiding partisan political controversy.

There are two explicit references in the Agreement to women in political and public life:

- The parties affirmed "the right of women to full and equal political participation." [Human Rights, ¶1].
- Pending the devolution of powers to the Assembly, the British government undertook to promote "social inclusion, including in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life." [Economic, Social and Cultural Equality Issues, ¶1]

In addition, there are many references to issues which concern women. For example, the Agreement in several sections states new institutions must be inclusive of all sections of the community. In the Northern Ireland context, "inclusiveness" is generally understood to refer to

that "inclusiveness" is not defined solely in sectarian terms.

along the other references to issues relevant to women are:

The agreement established a Civic Forum to act as a consultative mechanism on social, economic and cultural issues. It will be comprised of representatives of the business, trade union and voluntary sectors, as well as from other sectors designated by the Executive. (Strand One, Relations with Other Institutions, ¶34).

- The British government pledged to:
 - Incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Ireland law [Human Rights, UK Legislation, ¶2];
 - Require public authorities to promote equality of opportunity, including with regard to gender [Human Rights, UK Legislation, ¶3];
 - Establish an independent Human Rights Commission "with membership from Northern Ireland reflecting the community balance" [Human Right, UK Legis, ¶2];
 - Create a new Equality Commission to assume the roles now played by the Fair Employment Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Council. [Human Rights, New Institutions, ¶5].
- The Assembly may create a new Department of Equality [Human Rights, New Institutions, ¶7]
- The Irish government pledged to establish a Human Rights Commission and introduce equivalent equal status legislation for the Republic. [Human Rights, Irish Steps, ¶9]
- The participants pledged support for organizations which offer help to victims of violence and promote reconciliation between the traditions. [Human Rights, Reconciliation, ¶12,13]. Women are very active in these organizations.

Several of these provisions clearly lend themselves to themes for workshop discussion and we will take them into account when JoAnne takes a first crack at a draft program.

Cleared: POL - JTWagner 

cc: GTWI - Alyse Nelson
 Belfast - Kathy Stephens, Anne Toolan, Kerry McGinn
 EUR/UBI - Steve Kashkett
 Munich - Dave Pozorski

CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Belfast BT1 6EQ, Northern Ireland

VITAL VOICES - NORTHERN IRELAND
EARLY FALL, 1998

Background

The first Vital Voices: Women in Democracy conference convened women leaders from governmental and private sectors of central and eastern Europe, the United States and the European Union from July 9-11 in Vienna, Austria. Three hundred participants explored ways to strengthen the roles of women as democracy builders through three tracks of workshops:

- Law and Leadership
- Politics and Public Life
- Economics and Business

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton gave the keynote address at the conference and affirmed the U.S. government's support for women's role as democracy builders.

The Conference, which built global networks and forged partnerships among women, serves as a model for future Vital Voices conferences in other regions. As a result of these new collaborative efforts, U.S. government and private sector support for programs and policies that support the advancement of women and girls has significantly increased. The U.S. government and the Inter-American Development Bank will co-sponsor a hemisphere wide, Vital Voices of the Americas: Women in Democracy conference - to be held in Montevideo, Uruguay on October 1-3, 1998. On May 3, 1998, President Clinton announced that the US government in partnership with regional partners will also sponsor a Vital Voices of Northern Ireland Conference in the early Fall of 1998.

The Vital Voices conferences are an event in a process which supports U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's mandate to actively integrate issues affecting the lives of women into American foreign policy.

Goal of Vital Voices in Northern Ireland

Vital Voices will bring together women (and men) from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, and Ireland, as well as from other EU countries and the United States. The conference will address issues of concern to women in the areas of politics, business, and law and leadership in the context of the April 10 political agreement.

approved in referenda held in Northern Ireland and Ireland on May 22 and in light of the experience of other relevant post-conflict societies. Vital Voices will seek to build on existing ties, establish new relationships, set up mechanisms to sustain and intensify ongoing and new partnerships, and identify and secure resources to accomplish these goals. The U.S. is seeking a strong regional partner for the conference and coordinated follow-up. M

Duration, Size, and Format of Vital Voices in Northern Ireland

Vital Voices in Northern Ireland will prospectively run for three days. Approximately 400 people would be invited to participate, with a majority (between 200-250) from Northern Ireland and the remainder divided roughly equally between the United States and EU countries, including Ireland and the rest of the UK aside from Northern Ireland.

Organization of the conference would be broadly similar to that of Vital Voices in Vienna. Opening and closing plenaries will frame a series of workshops organized along three tracks. Each of the three tracks (political, business/economics, and law/ leadership) will hold a series of workshops of two hours length over the course of the conference. Members of the panels (a mix of participants from Northern Ireland, the EU, the United States, and where relevant, from post-conflict societies) for each workshop will make a five-minute presentation of a strategy pertinent to the topic under discussion. After these brief presentations, workshop participants (approximately 130 in each track) would break up into smaller groups for discussions of strategies presented by individual panel members. At the closing plenary, summaries of strategies and conclusions developed in the workshops of the three tracks will be presented.

In addition to Mrs. Clinton, representatives of the EU and the government of Northern Ireland, as well as other relevant personalities will be invited to speak at plenaries. Three evening dinners/ receptions are anticipated. These would not be occasions for extensive speech-making but rather opportunities for participants to continue to get to know one another.

Funding for Vital Voices

The U.S. government will provide manpower resources for organization and administration of the conference. A local-hire consultancy firm in Northern Ireland will take charge of the logistics of the conference. Funds to provide for transportation and accommodation for participants, as well as seed money for follow-on activities, will be identified from a variety of sources: private sector in the United States and other regional partners. The involvement of partners in the region, similar to that associated with Vital Voices in Vienna, as well as interested NGO's, will be welcome. M

M Now identified as
Clare Faulkner -
Project Planning.

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Final voices of Northern Ireland: Women in Democracy PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

9 a.m.
until
10 p.m.

Registration and Orientation

10 p.m.
until
1:30 p.m.

PLENARY 1

Welcome
Opening of the Conference
Speakers Frame Conference Issues

1:30 p.m.
until
2:00 p.m.

BREAK

2:00 p.m.
until
3:00 p.m.

FOCUS GROUPS
Focus groups will be informal roundtable discussions led by conference participants on specific issues.

5:00 p.m.
until
8:30 p.m.

EVENING RECEPTION AND DINNER

day of the conference will focus on sharing strategies within the three focus areas
conference: Politics & Public Life, Law & Leadership and Business & Economics.

PLENARY II

1
.m.

00 a.m.
until
30 a.m

BREAK

TRACKS

- Six workshop leaders representing diverse regions - present five minute strategies along the theme of the Track to the entire track group of between 100-150 participants.
- The track group then breaks down into six smaller groups. Each smaller group is lead by a workshop leaders who now serves as the group facilitator to develop the strategy they presented.
- Following the group discussions, a track rapporteur (there will be three rapporteurs, one for each track) collects the developed strategies and compiles the strategies in an overall report each rapporteur will present at the end of the conference.

1:30 a.m.
until
2:30 p.m.

TRACK 1	TRACK 2	TRACK 3
<p>Sharing Strategies Politics & Public Life</p>	<p>Sharing Strategies Law & Leadership</p>	<p>Sharing Strategies Economics & Business</p>
<p><i>Workshop A:</i></p>	<p><i>Workshop A:</i></p>	<p><i>Workshop A:</i></p>

tinues

LUNCH

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il
m.

30 p.m.
until
30 p.m.

Track 1	Track 2	Track 3
Sharing Strategies Politics & Public Life Workshop B:	Sharing Strategies Law & Leadership Workshop B:	Sharing Strategies Economics & Business Workshop B:

BREAK

3:30 p.m.
unti
1:00 p.m.

FOCUS GROUPS Focus groups will be informal roundtable discussions led by conference participants.

4:00 p.m.
until
5:00 p.m.

DINNER RECEPTION

6:00 p.m.
until
8:30 p.m.

1 day of the conference will focus on building partnerships between the three focus of the conference: Politics & Public Life, Law & Leadership and Business & Economics.

MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Track 1	Track 2	Track 3
<p>Building Partnerships: Politics & Public Life and Law & Leadership</p> <p><i>Workshop C:</i></p>	<p>Building Partnerships: Law & Leadership and Business and Economics</p> <p><i>Workshop C:</i></p>	<p>Building Partnerships: Economics & Business and Politics & Public Life</p> <p><i>Workshop C:</i></p>

a.m.
until
0 a.m.

30 a.m.
until
00 a.m.

BREAK

Track 1	Track 1	Track 1
<p>Building Partnerships: Politics & Public Life</p> <p><i>Workshop D:</i></p>	<p>Building Partnerships: Politics & Public Life</p> <p><i>Workshop D:</i></p>	<p>Building Partnerships: Politics & Public Life</p> <p><i>Workshop D:</i></p>

00 a.m.
until
0 p.m.

nues

LUNCH
(Working Lunch for Rapporteurs)

p.m.
until
0 p.m.

**HANDS-ON
MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRAINING**

(Rapporteurs Compile Track Summaries)

00 p.m.
until
00 p.m.

MEGA CLOSING PLENARY

Reports from Track Rapporteurs

Next Steps

Plenary Speakers

30 p.m.
until
2:00 p.m.

DINNER RECEPTION

as of June 18, 1998

Vital Voices: Women in Democracy Possible Workshops Topics

Politics and Public Life

- Participation in Traditional vs. Alternative Party Organizations
- Planting Grassroots Support
- Developing a Strategic Plan
- Getting Out the Vote
- Working with the Media
- Public Speaking Savvy
- Media Strategies to Build a Public Image
- Lobbying as a Political Tool
- Working With the Media
- Global Town Meetings
- Leadership Styles
- Managing the Change
- From Community Organizing to Political Leadership
- Creating Unlikely Alliances
- New Challenges to Leadership
- Women's Political Caucuses

Law & Leadership

- Civil and Human Rights in a Time of Change
- Gender-Based Discrimination
- Unfair Labor Practices
- Managing the Change
- Using the Legal System
- Getting More Women on the Bench
- Legal Aid
- Civic Society in a Time of Change: The role of advisory bodies such as the Civic Forum and NGO organizations
- Justice System in a time of Change: Restorative Justice
- Social Justice and Social Cohesion in a Time of Change
- Prisoner Rehabilitation
- Self-help in a time
- Police and Criminal Procedures
- NGO Friendly Laws
- Grassroots Leadership Development
- Finding a Corporate Sponsor
- Women & Legal Protection in a Civil Society
- Violence Against Women
- Legal Equality

Economics & Business

- Strategies for Microenterprises
- Home Enterprise
- Human Resources Management
- Business Strategies

inues

LUNCH
 (Working Lunch for Rapporteurs)

10 p.m.
until
20 p.m.

**HANDS-ON
 MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRAINING**
 (Rapporteurs Compile Track Summaries)

1:00 p.m.
until
3:00 p.m.

MEGA CLOSING PLENARY
 Reports from Track Rapporteurs
 Next Steps
 Plenary Speakers

3:30 p.m.
until
5:00 p.m.

DINNER RECEPTION

as of June 18,1998

Creative Problem Solving
Childcare
Building Economic Networks
Capital Resources and Strategies
Financial Planning and Cash Management
Financial Foreign Exchange
Investment Savvy
Perspectives on Privatization
Women's Career Networks
Gender Aspects of Economic Restructuring
Global Communication through the Internet

Building Partnerships Between Tracks

Expanding Opportunities : Skills and Training Needed by all Sectors of
Society to Compete in a Global Economy
Encouraging Engagement: Interface Between Community-based
Organizations and Political Parties Organized on a Regional or
National Level
Managing the Change