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Eastwood Calls for a Review and Renewal of the Good Friday Agreement | 2018 | News

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SDLP Leader Colum Eastwood has called for a review and a renewal of the Good Friday Agreement. Mr Eastwood was speaking on the official 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. The anniversary will be marked by a series of events on Tuesday during which Mr Eastwood will meet President Bill Clinton, former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and former Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The SDLP Leader said,

"20 years on from the Good Friday Agreement, fond memories of commemoration and achievement find themselves clashing uncomfortably with the rawness of our current political failure.

As I said at my party conference this weekend, if Good Friday 20 years ago was to be the final destination for slow learners – we cannot allow it to fall victim to fast wreckers.

A review and renewal mechanism was built in to the Agreement and I believe now is the right time to trigger it. That review and renewal would seek to get our politics back on track following a year of failure.

It would seek to show that the narrow issues that we now contend

with are very minor compared with the broadness of progress and possibility which was mapped out for us in 1998. It could provide a roadmap for the restoration of the Executive and finally provide the North with a voice and answers to the looming Brexit threat.

The review wouldn't be about pulling the Agreement apart, it would instead be about getting back to it.

Previous negotiations have lessened the vision and principles of the 1998 Agreement. This is a time to enhance it. For instance, a review and renewal should reverse the flawed changes of subsequent agreements, particularly at St Andrews, which have been resulted in a deep polarisation of our politics.

As guarantors, this process must be led by the Irish and British Governments and involve all the parties in Northern Ireland.

As change engulfs the islands of Britain and Ireland following the Brexit result, the three strands of relationships at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement haven't dated - they have truly come of age. Its structure and spirit of power-sharing, partnership and cooperation across our islands is still the pathway to progress and reconciliation.

It is not just the best solution for our broken politics - it remains the only solution."