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## The Good Friday Agreement remains bedrock for progress - Adams

5-6 minutes

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10 April, 2018 - by [Gerry Adams TD](#)

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Féile an Phobail is today holding a conference to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Among those addressing the conference is Sinn Féin TD Gerry Adams.

In a wide-ranging contribution, Gerry Adams spoke on the role of the community sector in defending citizens' rights and promoting peace, the current situation and the future of the Good Friday Agreement.

Mr. Adams said: "I want to take the seán fhocal, 'Ar scáth a cheile a mhaireas na daoine' – We live in each other's shadow."

Gerry Adams said:

"The efforts for peace by the community were equally invaluable. Even in the darkest of times community groups in west Belfast sought to engage with our unionist neighbours, including unionist paramilitary organisations.

"Clonard Monastery was the cradle of the peace process. John Hume and I began the Hume Adams Initiative there. Fr Des Wilson, Fr Alec Reid among others played leadership roles."

Commenting on current events Gerry Adams said:

“Today all thinking republicans are committed to peaceful and democratic methods to achieve our aims. The IRA is gone. The war is over. Notwithstanding the worrying polarisation of politics here I believe the peace process is secure not least because there is no community support for a return to conflict.

“On the contrary the opposite is the case. So there is no threat to anyone from the community represented by Sinn Féin.

“However, no one should be surprised by the twists and turns that have occurred from April 10<sup>th</sup> 1998 to now. It is worth remembering the Good Friday Agreement was achieved without the Ulster Unionist Party talking to Sinn Féin. The DUP didn’t even turn up.”

Dealing with the issue of the Tory/DUP alliance and Brexit Gerry Adams said:

“For its own narrow, party political selfish reasons the Tory government has actively encouraged the most negative, intransigent and sectarian elements of political unionism to attack and undermine the Good Friday Agreement.

“The formal alliance between the DUP and the Tories is also causing significant difficulties, not least over Brexit. Brexit not only threatens the two economies on this island but it also threatens the Good Friday Agreement, in particular the human rights elements and safeguards.

“Currently, the institutions are still suspended. It is Sinn Féin’s view that the Irish and British governments must convene the British Irish Intergovernmental Conference. The responsibility of the Conference should be to produce a plan, a pathway to bring

forward the legislation and resources to secure these rights and implement the outstanding agreements from 20 years ago.

“This is a challenge for both governments and especially for the Irish Government given the negative stance of this British government, its lack of support for the Good Friday Agreement, and Theresa May’s pact with the DUP.”

In his final remarks about the Good Friday Agreement Gerry Adams said:

“Notwithstanding the ongoing difficulties the Good Friday Agreement remains the bedrock of any future agreement and for any progress. Indeed, the Good Friday Agreement should be unconditionally embraced by all political parties. This is the surest way for outstanding issues at the core of current difficulties to be resolved...

“Because of a deficit of positive leadership within unionism at this time there appears to be limited chances of progress. However, this is temporary and it does not mean we do nothing.

“Now is the time to build community consensus for change.

“Now is the time for outreach by progressives, not only to other progressive though this is vitally important, but also to those who do not share our views.

“The social and economic interests of working-class unionists and loyalists are not well served by the DUP or the UUP.

“This is most obvious in this city of Belfast and especially since the death of David Ervine and the electoral decline of the PUP.

“So while the peace process needs to be nurtured and developed into a process of communal tolerance and mutual respect – and

should never be taken for granted or neglected - there also have to be ways to develop a prosperity process...

“I welcome yesterday’s initiative by loyalists.

“Some may be sceptical but we have a duty to support all positive initiatives...

“The Agreement commits a British government to hold a referendum on unity and to legislate for a united Ireland should a majority vote for that outcome. Sinn Féin gets criticised for raising this.

“It would be more becoming of our critics, especially those in Government or the Oireachtas, who are supposed to promote the Good Friday Agreement, if they applied themselves to the formidable challenge of persuading a section of citizens in the north who identify as unionist that their future economic, social, cultural and community wellbeing will be best found in a new Ireland.

“The Agreement has not failed and it will not fail because communities like this one which helped to create it are wedded to these principles.”