

**FROM: ROSALIE FLANAGAN
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT
30 SEPTEMBER 1998**

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NEIL ROBINSON, IDB - FAX

VITAL VOICES EVENTS IN THE US : OCTOBER 1998

Issue: Secretary of State and Mr Trimble and/or Mr Mallon, have been invited to speak at Vital Voices reception in New York on 8 October. Briefings and speaking notes are required.

Timing: Urgent.

Recommendation: That the enclosed briefing, speech and speaking notes are included in the briefing for Ministers.

Detail:

1. The Secretary of State has been invited by Alyse Nelson to speak at 2 Vital Voices events in the US.
2. The invitation does not include details of who will be attending the New York event. I have been unable to contact Alyse Nelson and I have asked the NI Bureau in Washington to provide some personality notes to you directly as soon as possible.
3. Enclosed is a draft speech for the Secretary of State, which for speed I am side copying to Mr Warner and Mr Kelly who may want to finalise the speech, and pass comments directly to you. The speech draws largely from the Waterfront Vital Voices Speech, although it is considerably shorter. Also enclosed are some bull point speaking notes for use by Mr Trimble and/or Mr Mallon, and some background briefing which would be used for all.

Rosalie Flanagan

ROSALIE FLANAGAN
☎ 28420

PS:

I have just been informed by the Secretary of State's office that she will be in Iowa on 22 October, and thus unable to attend the Chicago Vital Voices event. Can you therefore clarify what further briefing will be required in relation to the Vital Voices events on 22 October and 13 October.

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DRAFT SPEECH FOR SECRETARY OF STATE

VITAL VOICES FOLLOW UP EVENTS IN THE US : OCTOBER 1998

[Comment on any remarks made by previous speakers (may include David Trimble/Seamus Mallon).

I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak at this reception in honour of the Vital Voices - Belfast Initiative.

We continue to be grateful to President and Mrs Clinton and to all our friends in America for their support for the search for peace in Northern Ireland.

We are particularly grateful also to all those of you who have gathered here for this event today. All of you are saying clearly that you want to support peace in Northern Ireland, and that you are interested in promoting increased economic development which will be a major factor in fostering the peace and ensuring that it grows.

The Vital Voices Conference recently held in Belfast is part of a global initiative by the US Government to promote the advancement of women, to build on existing ties, establish new relationships, expand partnerships and help secure resources to strengthen the role of women in democratic and public life.

As you know, the Conference was a resounding success; all who attended were stimulated by the determination expressed by all the speakers, to harness and use the force that women can and will be in Northern Ireland society.

So I am delighted to come here today, to build on the work which began in Belfast. We are all resolved to ensure that the ideas and hopes, expressed so vividly there, are given the opportunity to grow and flourish.

I believe that we have, at last, a real opportunity for change in Northern Ireland.

Women are playing a very important part in bringing about the change. They have been vital voices in society in Northern Ireland throughout the last 30 years.

The troubles brought many women to the forefront of community development issues. Successful cross-community relationships have been established even during the worst of times, and from this there is a strong desire on behalf of women to voice their needs and aspirations for the future.

This voice is often articulated through the over 400 women's groups in Northern Ireland - including business and professional groups, the voluntary sector, community organisations, statutory bodies, education and child care organisations. Many of those groups were present at the Conference in Belfast.

Women in Northern Ireland have so much more to unite than divide them. A recognition of this was key to the foundation of the Women's Coalition founded in 1996. They helped to ensure that women's voices were heard in the talks process. Along with all the women who have worked for many years in the established political parties in Northern Ireland, the Women's Coalition made a constructive and progressive contribution to the talks process.

But the lack of women in senior positions in politics in Northern Ireland is still a serious problem. There are no Northern Ireland MPs or MEPs. Only 15% of local councillors are women and of the 108 members elected in the Assembly, only 13 are women.

We want to see many women getting involved. There is still a very long way to go. I have supported - both in Opposition and in Government - the efforts of the women's groups in organising conferences to raise awareness and to identify ways to increase women's participation in politics at every level in Northern Ireland public life.

It is vital that women's voices are heard and taken into account in all decisions which affect their lives. In Northern Ireland, as in any society, the continued exclusion of half the population from decision making is a barrier to the kind of vibrant, stable and inclusive society we all want to see.

The British Government is vigorously pursuing its women related priorities.

Tony Blair has appointed Baroness Jay as the Cabinet Minister for Women, and many of our policies which affect women are being taken forward both in legislation and in action. These

cover a range of issues such as childcare, unemployment, education, legal protectors, and domestic violence. For example: a New Deal for lone parents will help women back into work. We are taking steps to identify and plan the particular needs of children and parents in Northern Ireland, and a new Play Care initiative will provide out of school play opportunity for children to enable parents to return or remain in work. We are also providing help through a new child care tax credit scheme to help parents with the cost of child care. We are working to increase the number of women appointed to public bodies and working on a Northern Ireland Strategy to combat Violence against women.

As part of our follow up to the Belfast Conference I am pleased [to be able to tell you today] that Pearl Sagar has been appointed as a consultant to co-ordinate and develop the partnerships which were suggested at the Conference. A steering group, representing a variety of interests in Northern Ireland and the US [has also been] [will shortly be] established to oversee and advise on the follow up. We want to grasp wholeheartedly at all partnership opportunities, and to develop the strong links which already exist between people on both side of the Atlantic. We want to create new ties and make new connections which will allow groups to work together more effectively.

Finally I want to repeat my heartfelt gratitude to the people in the US who have supported the initiative which will play such a vital role as we move forward to peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

SPEAKING NOTES FOR "BRIEF REMARKS" WHICH MR MALLON HAS BEEN INVITED TO MAKE IN NEW YORK

- Thank you for invitation to this reception. Pleased to say a few words about the Vital Voices follow up
- Facing possibly the most awesome journey ever undertaken in the history of the island of Ireland.
- Remains imperative that all Vital Voices be heard at this time .
- Taking an analogy from the construction industry, the Agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday produced the site and design, and the building work is now under way.
- The Agreement will succeed if all work together in partnership and inclusively.
- Partnerships will also be the key to success in taking forward the momentum which began at the Vital Voices Conference in Belfast.
- Know that partnerships with our good friends in the US can produce great benefits as we move to underpin the peace which we all desire and the economic growth that we need to flourish.

SPEAKING NOTE FOR "BRIEF REMARKS" WHICH MR TRIMBLE HAS BEEN INVITED TO MAKE IN NEW YORK

- Grateful for invitation and opportunity to say a few words.
- Many mothers, wives, daughters of Northern Ireland have been tenacious voices for peace.
- Fitting that this "Vital Voices" initiative recognises just how vital those voices can be in building peace and stability in Northern Ireland.
- With the Belfast Agreement on Good Friday, there is a historic and honourable opportunity for all in Northern Ireland.
- The New Assembly can transform politics in Northern Ireland, strengthen and design local democracy and all people have the opportunity to play their full part.
- Needs, concerns, energies, vision and ideas of Northern Ireland women are vitally important to this task.
- Appreciate the interest which all present have and confident that the partnerships which will grow as a result of the Vital Voices initiative will play a major part in contributing to peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

BACKGROUND BRIEF

EVENT: VITAL VOICES - BELFAST INITIATIVE FOLLOW UP

INVITATION FROM: ALYSE NELSON, OFFICE OF THE SENIOR CO-ORDINATOR FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ISSUES AT THE US DEPARTMENTS OF STATE

TO: SECRETARY OF STATE, FIRST MINISTER, DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

LOCATION: NEW YORK

DATE: 8 OCTOBER 1998

TIME: EVENT 5 - 7 PM
PARTICIPATION BY SECRETARY OF STATE 5.30 - 6.30pm

BACKGROUND

This event is a follow up to the Vital Voices Conference held in Belfast on 31 August 1998. It is one of 3 separate events being held in the US in October in honour of the Vital Voices Belfast Initiative.

PURPOSE

The purpose is to build an ongoing Vital Voices Belfast US Working Group by (i) encouraging US participants to continue to develop partnerships with women in NI and (ii) encouraging private sector representatives in supporting the Vital Voices partnerships projects and other programmes benefiting women in NI.

ATTENDEES

The reception will be attended by Vital Voices participants and representatives of organisations and corporations interested in supporting peace and economic development in NI. [Further information on personalities involved will be provided by the NI Bureau in Washington].

VOICES

Vital Voices is an on-going, global initiative which supports US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's mandate to integrate issues affecting women into the mainstream of American foreign policy. The Vital Voices conferences seek to build on existing ties, establish new relationships, expand partnerships, and secure resources to strengthen the roles of women in democracy.

During the first two days of each Vital Voices conference, participants develop strategies for action in three focused areas of concern to women. Vital Voices Belfast focused on women's

- Participation in Public Life
- Legal and Social Progress in Civil Society
- Economic Development in a Time of Change.

The closing day of the Vital Voices conference focused on "Partnership Opportunities" for the future. Conference participants will continue to build on the conference strategies by developing on-going partnerships and exploring follow-up projects.

The participants of the Vital Voices conference come together to share their knowledge, experience, and expertise. The "Partnership Opportunities" portion of the conference encouraged participants to focus on and think creatively about how to maximise their participation.

“PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES”

Prior to the Vital Voices conference government agencies, private sector corporations, non-governmental organisations, experts, and individuals developed “Partnership Plans”. The plans outlined follow-up projects focused around the conference themes. Each “Partnership Plan” was included in the conference programme. On the closing day of the conference, the “Partnership Plans” were presented and further developed at working sessions. By the end of the day, “Partnership Plans” were moulded into partnership projects that suit the needs of the Vital Voices participants.

FOLLOW UP TO BELFAST CONFERENCE

A steering group representing various interests in NI and the US is being established to advise on how the outcomes of the Conference should be taken forward, and Pearl Sagar is to be appointed as a consultant to co-ordinate the follow up to the Partnership Plans.