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## Media Centre

### Hain announces group to look at the past

Friday 22 June 2007

Secretary of State Peter Hain MP has announced the formation of an independent consultative group to seek a consensus across the community in Northern Ireland on the best way deal with the legacy of the past.

The group will be co-chaired by Lord Eames, the former Archbishop of Armagh and Denis Bradley, the first vice-chairman of the Policing Board.

The full membership of the Group is **Jarlath Burns**, former GAA captain of Armagh and GAA analyst, **Rev Lesley Carroll**, Presbyterian Minister, **Willie John McBride**, former captain of the British and Irish Lions rugby team, **James Mackey**, former lecturer in philosophy at Queen's University Belfast and visiting professor at Trinity College Dublin, **Elaine Moore**, alcohol and drugs counsellor at Northlands, based at Magilligan Prison and **David Porter**, Director of the Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland.

In addition, Martti Ahtisaari and Brian Currin have agreed to act as international advisers to the panel to offer impartial advice on any lessons that might be learned for Northern Ireland from their wide-ranging experience of addressing the aftermath of conflict in other countries.

Peter Hain said: **"The Government cannot tell the people of Northern Ireland how they should deal with the past – only the people themselves can try to answer that question.**

**"This consultative group provides a platform for people to express their own views on how to address the violent legacy of the Troubles which impacted on so many across all sections of society.**

**"I know that this will not be easy. I understand that many do not want to discuss the past. It is too painful and personal and I respect those views. But I believe that with the historic political agreement that was implemented only last month, it is time to pause and ask how a society that went through a violent and long conflict wants to deal with its past.**

**"The question is how Northern Ireland might approach its past in a way that heals rather than poisons, that enables everyone to focus on building a shared future, not looking constantly over shoulders to a divided past.**

**"Only the people of Northern Ireland can answer, I hope with the help of the consultative group headed by Lord Eames and Denis Bradley – who are highly respected across both communities."**

#### Notes to Editors

The Group's terms of reference are:-

To consult across the community on how Northern Ireland society can best approach the legacy of the events of the past 40 years; and to make recommendations, as appropriate, on any steps that might be taken to support Northern Ireland society in building a shared future that is not overshadowed by the events of the past.

To present a report setting out conclusions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by summer 2008.

In going about its work, the Consultative Group should consider:

- i. the landscape of initiatives that have already been taken by Governments and non-Governmental groups;
- ii. work already done – and ongoing – in this area, including consultation exercises;
- iii. the resources that would be required to implement any recommendations that it makes.

The Group's report will be published. Funding will be provided for a secretariat to support its work.

As the group begins work, it may well choose to engage additional advisers to ensure it has access to a wide range of expert advice, both on international issues and on other specialist areas.



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