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## Press Releases

### TALKS MUST ADDRESS THE PAST

16th September 2004

How we deal with the past must form part of the talks at Leeds Castle if we are serious about achieving long-term settlement.

This call comes from Healing Through Remembering (HTR), a diverse group of individuals who have spent three years developing a series of recommendations for how to come to terms with a conflictual past.

Speaking as the talks are set to begin, HTR's Chairman Professor Roy

McClelland said: "Achieving a political settlement is important and we welcome the start of today's talks, but for any settlement to succeed we need to remember the past in a way that enables us to heal the wounds in our society. Without this, any long-term political settlement could be easily undermined."

"There will be no ultimate peace until we have a clearer understanding of our shared past. Dealing with the past is a long-term process and there is certainly no quick solution that can be debated and agreed over four days of talks. This is a long, difficult and complex journey and there is a need for everyone sitting around the table to acknowledge the past in order to go forward", added Professor McClelland.

By posing the question 'How should we remember the events connected with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland' the Healing Through Remembering project received a wide range of submissions from the general public, organisations and individuals. It has used these to develop a series of recommendations on how to move the process forward, which include:

- Acknowledgement
- A Storytelling Process
- A Day of Reflection
- Permanent Living Memorial Museum
- A Network of Commemoration and Remembering Projects

A number of working groups are currently developing these recommendations into practical proposals.

“As a first step, we would call on those people representing our society within the talks at Leeds Castle to engage in a spirit of tolerance and respect and to be mindful that a failure to acknowledge the past will undermine any shared future. Everyone has a part to play in dealing with the memories of the past and there needs to be a willingness to take risks if we are to avoid further damage and move into a new future built on a shared acknowledgement of the past”, said Professor McClelland.

“Some will argue that drawing attention to the past will simply slow up the prospect of a political settlement”, added Professor McClelland, “however, we believe that coming to terms with the past is vital for moving forward and for any lasting peace”.

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Healing Through Remembering   Alexander House, 17a Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, Northern Ireland. BT2 8HD   Tel: 028 9023 8844   [email us](#)



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