

**3 March 2009**

**Fianna Fáil urged to support call by Green minister  
to withdraw from European Defence Agency**

Fianna Fáil has being urged to support a call by the leader of Green Party, Minister John Gormley, for Ireland to withdraw from the European Defence Agency (EDA). The People's Movement, one of the leading No groups in the recent referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, has welcomed the statement by Minister Gormley. Its chairperson, former Green MEP Patricia McKenna, said: "We welcome the call by Minister Gormley for Ireland's withdrawal from the EDA and we believe it is a recognition by one section of government that our participation in this agency is a major problem and draws us even closer to the military and defence aspects of the EU. We hope Fianna Fáil will support his proposal."

Ms McKenna went on to say: "Ireland's participation in this agency, which was established to facilitate EU arms industries, was never officially sanctioned by either the public or the elected representatives of this state. No mandate was ever given to the Irish government to participate in the EDA. During the last government Fianna Fáil signed up to this controversial agency without any public debate or prior notice to either house of the Oireachtas."

However, McKenna warned that Ireland's withdrawal from the EDA could not to be used to hoodwink the public into believing they could now support the Lisbon Treaty. "The military aspects of the Lisbon Treaty will remain unchanged and while it would be a very welcome development for Ireland to withdraw from the EDA it would not alter the proposals contained in Lisbon. Minister Gormley's assertion that 'Ireland should withdraw from the European Defence Agency (EDA) to help persuade the public to back the Lisbon Treaty' is a worrying signal that a spin will be put on this issue prior to any second vote on Lisbon".

Mr Gormley also said he would begin drafting new legislation ensuring transparency of funding for referendums within 10 days and Ms McKenna has called on him to ensure that the legislation will also address outside interference. She said: "The minister needs to address the issue of interference by the EU institutions in our referendum process."

"The best way the minister can ensure transparency in the referendum process would be to restore the Referendum Commission's original remit which is to outline the cases for and against the referendum proposal to the public and to promote debate and discussion on it.

Mr Gormley's failure last year to give the commission back its full powers was a major disappointment. In opposition Mr Gormley strongly criticised the then government's decision to emasculate the role of the Referendum Commission and aptly described it as an attempt to 'clip the wings' of the Referendum Commission. He said: 'The real intention is to ensure that the Irish people do not get real information.' Mr Gormley clearly understood the importance of the commission and its vital contribution to a fair and democratic referendum process. As the minister responsible he now has the opportunity to ensure that people do get real information" she concluded.

[ENDS]

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