

**24 February 2010**

### **Who represents Ireland at historic EU defence ministers' meeting?**

The government has been called on to state who is representing Ireland at a controversial EU defence ministers' meeting currently taking place in Palma de Mallorca under the Spanish presidency of the EU. The calls come following the discovery that the EU presidency website lists disgraced TD, Willie O'Dea as Ireland's representative. In a press statement issued today by the People's Movement, which campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty during last year's referendum, the organisation claims that the Spanish presidency website\* lists Willie O'Dea as Ireland's representative.

The organisation's chairperson, former MEP Patricia McKenna, said: 'While this may be a mistake considering Mr. O'Dea was in fact our defence minister up to last week, it still raises the question as to who exactly is participating on Ireland's behalf at this defence ministers' meeting, the first since the Lisbon Treaty came into force'.

McKenna went on to say: 'In the context of last year's referendum, this meeting is of major significance as it will consider the increased military ties authorised by the Lisbon Treaty. Attempts to move forward the new Common Security and Defence Policy established by Lisbon is one of the essential goals of the Spanish presidency. The Spanish presidency has stated quite clearly that during its six-month term it wants to "achieve a strong, sustainable European defence industry which is competitive within and beyond our frontiers"'.

'EU diplomats admit that "thanks to the treaty, the opportunity is there to reinforce Europe's defence, to give it more visibility", and that under the provisions of "permanent structured cooperation" it "offers the possibility of a pilot group of EU nations to work together in a particular military area, without fearing a veto from another European capital"'.

'The fact that Spain, which is the current holder of the rotating EU presidency, has made the relaunch of a European defence strategy one of the "fundamental objectives" of its six-month tenure should be cause for concern for a so-called "neutral" country like Ireland. Regrettably, not one word of concern has been raised in either house of the Oireachtas. This is a damning indictment of those elected representatives who dismissed out of hand our concerns about the military implications of the Lisbon Treaty. The government must make a statement on this issue without delay, stating who is representing Ireland at this meeting and, more importantly, what exactly is Ireland's position' McKenna concluded.

ENDS

\* <http://www.eu2010.es/en/agenda/informalesministros/evento04.html>

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