

## **Press Statement**

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### **SLIGO MEETING CALLS FOR REJECTION RE-NAMED EU CONSTITUTION - LISBON TREATY**

Speaking at a public meeting in the Glasshouse Hotel in Sligo tonight (Thursday Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>) organised by The People's Movement, **former Green Party MEP, Patricia McKenna** strongly criticised what she called the "sheer arrogance and disregard shown by political leaders throughout the EU for the wishes of the voters. Ms. McKenna, who is Chairperson of the Peoples Movement, an organization campaigning against the Lisbon Treaty in the forthcoming referendum, said, "Regardless of the fact that voters in France and the Netherlands have rejected the EU Constitution, it has been renamed, repackaged and put back on the table as if nothing had happened."

Ms. McKenna said, "There is almost unanimous agreement among EU leaders, including Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, that the substance of the rejected Constitution hasn't changed. *"The difference between the original Constitution and the present Lisbon Treaty is one of approach, rather than content ... The proposals in the original constitutional treaty are practically unchanged. They have simply been dispersed through the old treaties in the form of amendments."* Says Giscard D'Estaing the former French President and Chairman of the Convention which drew up the original text."

Ms. McKenna went on to say, "The blatant conspiracy by EU governments to deny their electorates the right to vote on this treaty is an affront to democracy. To quote French president Nicolas Sarkozy: "France was just ahead of all the other countries in voting No. "It would happen in all member states if they have a referendum. There is a cleavage between people and governments...A referendum now would bring Europe into danger. There will be no treaty if we had a referendum in France, which would again be followed by a referendum in the UK." So basically what we have is fundamental change without the consent of the citizens.

“EU leaders openly admit that they have taken the rejected EU constitution and renamed and repackaged it in an unreadable format. Giscard D'Estaing said: "Public opinion will be led to adopt, without knowing it, the proposals that we dare not present to them directly... All the earlier proposals will be in a new text, but will be hidden and disguised in some way...What was [already] difficult to understand will become utterly incomprehensible, but the substance has been retained." “The conspiracy to push this through against the wishes of the majority of citizens of EU member states is undeniable”, she said.

Also speaking at the meeting was the **Secretary of the People’s Movement, Frank Keoghan** who said that, The People’s Movement would be playing a major role in the forthcoming referendum and would be striving to ensure that Irish people are not bullied into submission by the powerful and well-resourced political establishments of Dublin and Brussels.

Mr. Keoghan said, “This treaty is unacceptable for many reasons not least because it is a fundamental shift of power from the small to the big EU States, from National Parliaments to non-elected EU committees – the Commission, Council of Ministers and Court of Justice.”

“What we are going to vote on will have profound ramifications not just for Ireland but for the future of the EU as a whole.” The military aspects alone should be reason enough to reject it, he said. “It obliges Ireland to build up its military capacities while consolidating the European Defense Agency, whose purpose is to promote the arms industries. It allows for EU military operations without a UN mandate and includes a mutual defense clause, things that peace activists have always opposed.”

He pointed out that “The Renamed Constitution states unambiguously in Section 2, Article 27 (2) that: "The common security and defence policy" it proposes "shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence. Member States must "make civilian and military capabilities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy ..." and "undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities."

This means there would be an EU constitutional obligation on Ireland to provide military resources to the EU for its security and defence policies and to increase military spending through the European Defence Agency in order to ensure compatibility. There is also a ‘solidarity clause’ that proposes a mutual defence pact – similar to that of NATO. This “solidarity clause” has even been extended by Lisbon to cover the supply of energy and other

issue.”

**Local Independent Councillor** and regional representative for the People’s Movement, **Alderman. Declan Bree**, who hosted the meeting said, “This is a foundational document that sets up a new European Union that has a new legal personality, and sets it on a course not of facilitating better cooperation among sovereign democratic member states and their people, but of creating a sovereign, democracy-flavoured European Nation. And the sad thing is that our heads of government are signing away our national democracies in a document I would be certain that few if any of them have read”.

The fact that Ireland will lose its right to a permanent EU Commissioner is an issue of real concern. As a small nation we will be affected by the particularly insidious loss of influence of the small nations in favour of the large nations. We will be outside the Commission, the body with the monopoly on proposing all EU laws, for five years at a time. This plus the change in the council voting system, whereby population size will be deciding factor, will significantly reduce our influence. “ said Mr. Bree.

It is also clear that the fundamental rights that would be conferred on us by the, much extolled Charter of Fundamental Rights would not be fundamental at all but could be varied or restricted in the interest of a ‘*common organisation of the market*’ or to advance ‘*objectives of general interest pursued by the Community*’. This would occur despite the accession of the Union to the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms because Protocol No 5 qualifies this accession in stating: ‘*that the accession of the Union shall not affect the competences of the Union or the powers of its institutions*’.

“This treaty provides for a massive shift of power from the nations of the EU to Brussels and will effectively make us revert to being a province of mainland Europe...the northwest corner” concluded Mr. Bree.

Ends.

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