

## **Motion re Irish Neutrality**

That Dáil Éireann recognises:

— that Irish neutrality has served us well, allowing Ireland to play a constructive role in the world, contributing to nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, humanitarianism and peacekeeping missions.

— the bravery and courage of Irish peacekeepers currently deployed around the world, and in particular those serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights.

notes that:

— the rejection by the Irish people of both the Nice I and Lisbon I referenda were informed in part by their concerns that those treaties of the European Union would diminish Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality;

— the response of the Irish government to these concerns in advance of the subsequent Nice II referendum was outlined in the Seville Declarations on the Treaty of Nice, wherein the Government of Ireland made 'a firm commitment to the people of Ireland, solemnized in this Declaration, that a referendum will be held in Ireland on the adoption of any such decision and on any future Treaty which would involve Ireland departing from its traditional policy of military neutrality.';

— the Seville Declaration Ireland further reiterated 'that the participation of contingents of the Irish Defence Forces in overseas operations, including those carried out under the European security and defence policy, requires (a) the authorisation of the operation by the Security Council or the General Assembly of the United Nations, (b) the agreement of the Irish Government and (c) the approval of Dáil Éireann, in accordance with Irish law.';

— the response of the Irish government to these concerns in advance of the subsequent Lisbon II referendum was outlined through the Guarantees, wherein through National Declaration Ireland reiterated 'that the participation of contingents of the Irish Defence Forces in overseas operations, including those carried out under the European common security and defence policy requires (a) the authorisation of the operation by the Security Council or the General Assembly of the United Nations, (b) the agreement of the Irish Government, and (c) the approval of Dáil Éireann, in accordance with Irish law.';

— the National Declaration contained within the Guarantees, Ireland further declared that it would participate only in European Defence Agency projects or programmes 'that contribute to enhancing the capabilities required for participation in UN-mandated missions for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.';

— on 25 June 2013, an Tánaiste Micheál Martin in a statement to the Dáil stated 'It appears that Fine Gael is arguing that Ireland is failing in its European responsibilities and is allowing Russia and China to have a veto over our peacekeeping activities. This

is nothing more than an out-of-touch ideological obsession on the part of Fine Gael which ignores the facts of Ireland's international standing.';

— the Fianna Fáil 2020 General Election Manifesto stated under the heading 'Fully maintain neutrality and the Triple Lock' that 'Fianna Fáil reaffirms its commitment to the retention of the Triple Lock of UN mandate or authorisation, Government and Dáil approval, prior to committing Defence Forces personnel on overseas service. Ireland has correctly conferred primacy to the UN since joining in 1955, working with other UN members in supporting international action in areas such as disarmament, peacekeeping across its full spectrum, humanitarian/development actions and human rights implementation. We will fully maintain neutrality and the triple lock mechanism.'

— the current programme for government commits this government to 'ensure that all overseas operations will be conducted in line with our position of military neutrality and will be subject to a triple lock of UN, Government and Dáil Éireann approval.';

— an IPSOS/MRBI poll of 15 April 2022 showed two-thirds of voters did not want to see any change in neutrality 'generally understood as...[requiring] a United Nations Security Council resolution for Irish troops to be committed abroad.';

— the Report of the Chair on the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy stated that 'A considerable majority of those who spoke or wrote on this topic expressed the view that there is presently no public appetite for a change to the current position on neutrality...';

further notes that:

— government is presiding over a worsening recruitment and retention crisis that is seeing more members leaving than are recruited to the Permanent Defence Forces on a yearly basis;

—there are currently 7,671 members of the Permanent Defence Forces, against an establishment figure of 9,600 and a Level of Ambition 2 contained in the Report of the Commission on the Future of the Defence Forces requirement of 11,500;

— arising from this worsening recruitment and retention crisis, the Naval Service can currently only put between one and two ships to sea to patrol and secure Irish waters;

— that Ireland currently lacks the primary radar which is a pre-requisite to adequately monitoring activity in Irish skies;

— that Level of Ambition 2 as outlined within the Report of the Commission on the Future of the Defence Forces outlined a required need of investment of €246.5 million annually over ten years and that government fell short of this investment by €70 million in 2023, and will also fail to meet this target by €70 million in 2024;

— that the government has decided to withdraw Irish Defence Forces participation from the UNDOF mission to the Golan Heights, to which Ireland has contributed over 2,700 troops over the past decade;

calls on government

— adequately fund the Defence Forces in 2024 to meet the minimum requirements outlined within Level of Ambition 2 of the Report of the Commission on the Future of the Defence Forces;

— review the decision of government to withdraw Irish participation in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force mission to the Golan Heights;

— establish a Citizen's Assembly tasked with agreeing a wording of a constitutional amendment to enshrine the principle of neutrality in the Irish constitution.

— to engage with EU institutions and Member States with a view to recognising the integrity of neutral states within the EU treaties should a Constitutional Amendment be carried;

— ensure that members of the Irish Defence Forces deployed on overseas missions do so with a mandate from the United Nations;

— that any proposed substantive change to Ireland neutral status, particularly the removal of neutrality protections such as the so-called triple lock, be put directly before the Irish people through referendum.