



May 18, 2023

Louise Richardson,
Chairperson,
Consultative Forum on International Security Policy

Dear Louise Richardson:

I am writing to you on behalf of Swords to Ploughshares (StoP), a network of peace groups and peace activists concerned about Ireland's increasing involvement in processes of militarisation and weapons production.

You have been appointed Chair of the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy by the Irish Government. As you know the question of peace and security for the people of the world, and in this case Ireland, is a massive and vital one, and by 'security' we are also thinking of human security in a broad sense.

The Irish Government has appointed you as chair of this body as the highly capable person you clearly are. It is also clear, however, that the Government has very specific expectations for the future dilution of Irish neutrality, for example through ending the 'triple lock' on deployment of the Irish Army outside the State. They equally clearly expect you to be 'a safe pair of hands' to deliver the desired recommendations.

Your CV indicates that you are well thought of by governments and establishments in the UK and USA. The word 'neutrality' is downplayed in the brief of the Consultative Forum, no doubt because Irish neutrality is popular among the people of Ireland. This is also why the model of a 'consultative forum' has been chosen rather than a citizens' assembly, which would have considerably more agency and impact, because the government knows that the latter body would likely come up with a robust defence of neutrality.

We consider that the current model of a 'consultative forum', dispersed and repeated over several days, with no wider public consultation, is inadequate for effective democratic consideration of such large and complex issues. We are seriously concerned that the voice of those who support Irish neutrality as a positive force for peace and who oppose our increased integration into EU and NATO military structures will be effectively excluded from the Forum. It is up to yourself and the conduct of the Consultative Forum—especially in its eventual Report—to achieve more than an outcome predetermined by the Government. We hope that you will rise to the occasion.

Yours most sincerely,

Iain Atack,

On behalf of Swords to Ploughshares Ireland.
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