



Ireland and America: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Context

**Embassy of Ireland
Washington
March 2009**

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1. Summary

This Review was requested by the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen, TD, during a visit to New York in July 2008.

The United States has played a central role in Ireland's economic development and path to peace. At a time of change, of peace in Northern Ireland but of very challenging economic circumstances, the Review reflects on the vital importance of relations between Ireland, Irish America and the United States in general, and explores steps that can be taken to further strengthen that relationship.

The Review places particular emphasis on the priority of the economic relationship between Ireland and the US. The importance in the United States of Ireland's membership of the EU is also addressed as well as the need to add new energy to Ireland's image.

The Review focuses on the incomparable benefit of Irish America and suggests a number of new initiatives to recognise and acknowledge our diaspora. It also calls for new co-ordination of Irish America at leadership level.

The Review looks at the potent links and opportunities generated by educational and cultural engagement and contact. It also addresses the need for new immigration arrangements, for supporting the Irish-born communities in the US and for a resolution of the status of the undocumented.

The opportunities for engagement, particularly in light of peace in Northern Ireland, with the Administration and Congress, including the need for a more structured dialogue on wider foreign policy issues, are examined. The Review also includes proposals for the development and upgrading of Ireland's diplomatic representation in the US.

The Review proposes ongoing strategic direction at political level through the establishment in Ireland of a new Ireland-US Strategic Policy Group.

2. Introduction

The immense challenges of the global financial crisis serve as a reminder of our interdependence and why our relationship with the United States must continue to be developed and cherished.

The United States has played a central role in the achievement of peace and in Ireland's economic development.

When the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen, T.D., initiated this Review in July 2008, he recalled that these achievements were "built on the hard work of generations of Irish people who came to America, and more recently, those who came from America to Ireland to invest and to work with us at home."

2009 sees the beginning of a new Administration in Washington. It is a time of change. There is an ideal opportunity to consolidate and build new political connections and to nourish and refresh our existing relations.

The success of the Northern Ireland peace process also allows the Government to reprioritise and refocus its energies in the US.

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This Review's purpose is to reflect on our relationship with the US and to identify areas where there is potential to advance our goals in a spirit of partnership and proven mutual friendship.

There are a number of other issues relevant to Irish America and the diaspora generally, including the question of Oireachtas representation and voting rights, that have been the focus of other reports and recommendations, including in the Report of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution (Seventh Report)¹. This current review can be seen as complementary to this earlier work.

The approach throughout this Review is headline rather than exhaustive. Some of the suggestions and reflections will require further exploration and amplification. This is,

¹ All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, Seventh Progress Report: Parliament, March 2002

therefore, the start of what should be a continuing process, the ongoing aim of which is to give priority and strategic focus to the indispensable connection between our two countries.

3. Ireland-US Relations: The Need for Special Attention and Priority

In a changing world it is appropriate that we continue to build our political and economic links – within Europe, in emerging markets, in Asia and Africa.

Our relationship with the United States must be a clear priority and command special attention. It is a relationship of extraordinary depth and energy. In many ways the relationship seems obvious but its very familiarity can be deceptive. It cannot be presumed to look after itself. It needs renewal and priority.

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The story of our relationship with the United States is one of great success and real achievement on so many levels. However, past success and achievements offer no certainties for the future.

Ireland and the US enjoy a mature, two-way relationship. But given the relative sizes of Ireland and the US, it is a relationship whose implications are the greater for us. It is important to review the relationship regularly and seek new ways to promote our mutual interests.

We must, therefore, take the initiative to actively preserve, renew and diversify this vital connection.

Overall, the Embassy and our Consulates in the US, working where required with state agencies, are currently dedicated to: supporting the economy in Ireland; supporting and acknowledging our community throughout the US; maintaining and strengthening the “human bridge” between Ireland and the US; promoting our culture; protecting and supporting the peace process; meeting our foreign policy goals; and providing a first class service to our resident and visiting citizens.

This Review includes a number of proposals and initiatives relevant to these priorities.

4. The Economic Relationship: Our First Priority

Ireland currently faces unprecedented economic challenges. Just as the world looks to the US to lead a global economic recovery, the quality of our economic relationship, and the steps we take to strengthen that relationship, will help promote recovery in Ireland.

The Ireland-US economic relationship is one of mutual benefit and is stronger now than at anytime in our history. US foreign direct investment accounts for 95,000 jobs in Ireland. Ireland is among the top ten investors in the US. Combined investment in our two countries is some 65 billion euro directly generating as many as 170,000 jobs.

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The US is Ireland's second largest trading partner and our largest export market with annual trade in goods and services between the two countries at over 50 billion euro.

The US is one of our most consistent and valuable sources of tourism. Around one and a half million people travel annually between our two countries. Open skies and new pre-clearance arrangements at Shannon and Dublin agreed in November 2008 offer real potential to bring new visitors to Ireland.

Building on the economic relationship requires clarity of strategy especially in the current economic climate. And consolidating and building the economic relationship between Ireland and the US should be a central consideration to all our work and contacts.

In the short term, every effort has to be made to protect existing investment and maintain markets for Irish exports.

Developments in US trade, investment and taxation policy can have major economic impact on Ireland. The changing US regulatory environment requires constant attention. Our concerns must continue to be heard and understood at every influential level – the US Administration, Congress, organised labour and the business community.

State agencies such as the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and Tourism Ireland, all have highly developed and coherent strategies in the US marketplace. But the closest possible coordination will continue to be required both in Ireland and the US as our agencies adapt and develop strategies to address the new environment in the US marketplace covering industrial promotion, enterprise and trade, tourism (which is promoted on a North-South basis) and cultural promotion.

Our Embassy and Consulates are mandated to coordinate and cooperate at all levels with the state agencies, and actively do so.

Now is not the time to pull back from the US market – there are opportunities for exporters, though taking advantage of them will require investment in time, effort and resources. The role of Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia in assisting companies of all sizes to navigate their way into the US market is critical to their success.

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There are also new growth areas. The Obama Administration is placing green technology investment at the heart of its efforts to stimulate job creation, for example. Ireland as the “green island” is positioning itself to take advantage of new developments in this sector and particularly the market in clean technology products and services offers opportunities for Irish expertise and innovation.

Investment in scientific research is vital to Ireland’s development. A key objective is to establish Ireland as a knowledge society focused on excellence in science, technology and innovation, research and entrepreneurial capacity. The IDA and Enterprise Ireland, as well as Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), have crucial roles to play in this vital endeavour.

We must continue to put out a clear and consistent business message based on knowledge and innovation as set out in the Government’s recently published framework for building Ireland’s Smart Economy².

² Building Ireland’s Smart Economy – A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal, December 2008
www.taoiseach.gov.ie

In some sectors, notably in life sciences, there is considerable potential for making better use of the knowledge assets among our diaspora and for attracting Irish scientists and researchers back to Ireland to help develop Irish companies.

The US-Ireland R and D partnership is an excellent example of the type of collaboration that we are keen to nurture and develop. It represents a unique opportunity to enhance the special relationship that exists between Ireland and the US. Building on the existing partnership areas of nanotechnology, sensors, diabetes and cystic fibrosis, there is an opportunity to enhance and expand collaboration into new areas. SFI, in conjunction with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institute of Health (NIH), should work to identify new targets and partners in order to increase the R and D alliances between Ireland and the US. The opportunities for business collaboration focused on the Small Business Innovation Research and Technology Transfer Programmes at the NIH and the NSF are an important part of this process.

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Since its inception nearly a decade ago, the All-Ireland Cancer Consortium has been an important and productive programme for advancing clinical, public health and scientific research. The collaborative programme has fostered new training opportunities for the next generation of cancer researchers and care providers from Ireland, North and South, and the US. One of the strengths of the programme has been to exchange faculty and trainees and in the process forge new collaborations that continue to reap novel insights into cancer research.

Just as Ireland's economic success achieved considerable profile, we can expect a certain focus on the economic downturn.

Ireland needs to maintain a strong Government presence in the US. Visits by the Taoiseach and senior government Ministers around St Patrick's Day in particular, but also at other times during the year, are vital to delivering Ireland's economic messages at the highest levels of business and policy-making. Taoiseach and Ministerial-led trade delegations and promotional visits help protect existing business and build for the future. Our competitors are active in this field – we must remain so too.

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We must also continue to focus on our people – our entrepreneurs, skilled workers, researchers and graduates as our greatest economic asset. Empowering and supporting their activities in the US – through new visa arrangements, through internships at leading edge academic institutions and through professional and social support networks – are a potent investment in the Ireland–US economic relationship.

Ireland is already well-served by an array of existing networks in support of its economic agenda.

The Taoiseach’s Economic Advisory Board, drawing on friends at the highest levels in business in the US, has offered key advice and served in a most exceptional manner since the mid 1990s.

In consultation with its members and to ensure that it is geared to advise on current challenges, the work of the Advisory Board is being underpinned with specialised groups in those sectors which are strategically vital to the Irish economy: financial services, ICT, life sciences, green technology and others. For the foreseeable future, the US will continue to lead in each of these sectors, all of which are undergoing profound change. Ireland will need to keep abreast of developments and to be responsive to them. Such specialised boards can inform government policy in these sectors and assist Irish businesses.

Initiatives such as the Financial Advisory Board and the Silicon Valley-based Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG) offer strong community-based support and assistance in key strategic sectors of importance to Ireland. The voluntary contribution of these groups is a demonstration of the willingness by those who have achieved success to mentor and assist others seeking business guidance and advice. These groups should continue to be encouraged in every way possible and taken forward, as required, by the agencies.

In the current climate additional efforts will be required to protect and enhance Ireland’s image and to position ourselves to take advantage of the eventual economic turn around

Business networks which provide valuable professional and social support to new arrivals should continue to attract some financial support for their activities and this support should be extended to help younger networks become established so they can meet new and emerging needs.

In the current climate additional efforts will be required to protect and enhance Ireland's image and to position ourselves to take advantage of the eventual economic turn around. We will need to deploy all available resources and goodwill in the US to ensure that our determination to position ourselves for a future of renewed growth, and the steps taken to this end, are communicated and understood.

Given the acute difficulties facing the public finances, value for money must also be a priority. The advanced state of the peace process has progressively allowed the Embassy in Washington and our Consulates to reprioritise and focus more intently on promoting and supporting economic development in Ireland. It is imperative that Ireland gets maximum return for its overall efforts in the US. This means all our resources – the Department of Foreign Affairs' Promoting Ireland Abroad Division (PIAD), Embassy, Consulates and government agencies – working together across the board to achieve and deliver economic dividend for Ireland.

Bearing in mind the newly expanded role of the Federal government in Washington arising out of the financial crisis, there is an opportunity and a necessity for greater Embassy activity and outreach to support the wider work of economic promotion. Embassy staff specifically working on economic issues and promoting economic relations with the US should be reinforced to address this enhanced need.

The new Ireland-US Strategic Policy Group (the establishment of which is recommended elsewhere in this Review) should have the economic relationship between Ireland and the US as one of its central priorities. The scale of the economic relationship, and the opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed, suggest that this Group has a key role to play in guiding and giving future strategic direction to our vital economic partnership with the US.

5. Ireland, the US and the EU

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Being part of the single market, sharing a common currency and being committed to the wider ideal of the Union are all positives that have played to Ireland's undoubted advantage. The Lisbon referendum outcome generated a level of uncertainty and confusion in the United States business community, and also more broadly, regarding Ireland's place in Europe and how this is to evolve.

We should be greatly concerned at the possible negative consequences for inward investment arising directly from this uncertainty and confusion and also the opportunity this allows our competitors to question Ireland's status in Europe and to undermine Ireland's case for foreign direct investment.

The December European Council has charted a course which gives clarity regarding Ireland's intentions in respect of the Lisbon Treaty. We must continue to avail of all opportunities to articulate Ireland's EU credentials and to ensure that key decision makers understand Ireland's commitment to the Union's development and success.

Many US companies based in Ireland look to us to better understand the complex workings of the Union's institutions and indeed some would expect us actively to engage on their behalf in Brussels. Ireland should position itself as a friendly and helpful bridge and offer all possible support for these key investors in their dealings with the Union's institutions.

6. Ireland's Image in the US: Adding Energy

Ireland invariably evokes a positive reaction at all levels throughout the United States. Interest in Ireland is considerable (last year, apparently, there were some 199 million Google searches for the word "Ireland"). In short, Ireland's stock is good and Irish people are well-liked. Images of a peaceful and changing Ireland have long-since replaced earlier images of conflict and turmoil in Northern Ireland which, for almost a generation, dominated media attention and coverage. Ireland as a "green" and environmentally sensitive country also offers real potential.

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Ireland has thus probably one of the best "brands" of any country in the United States.

St Patrick's Day itself remains an extraordinary asset. The image of Ireland generated by numerous St Patrick's parades in the US has improved markedly in recent years and the positive publicity and attention that Ireland attracts around that time is incalculable. Visits at political level to priority locations around the United States during the period around St Patrick's Day are an important part of our overall effort to promote Ireland and to acknowledge the importance and vitality of our relationship with Irish America.

There is, however, a persistent sense, valid or not, that we should seek to do even more to capitalise on the asset of our positive image and derive more benefit from it across the board. There would thus be benefit in looking at new ways in which we could freshen up our image and give it added energy. Moreover, at a time of rapid change in the way Americans receive information, we should review our overall media strategy. It is proposed that the new Ireland-US Strategic Policy Group reflect further on this with a view to recommending new initiatives in this area.

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7. Irish America: A Resource of Incomparable Benefit

Our single greatest asset in the US is our diaspora. Irish America has helped Ireland's development and it remains a resource of incomparable benefit.

Many countries share the same values as the US and also enjoy close political, economic and social links. But we are unique for such a small country in that nearly 36 million Americans (12% of the population) claim Irish ancestry making them one of the most significant ethnic groups in the country. This figure does not include those reporting Scots-Irish ancestry who comprise some 5 million additional Americans.

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While many countries claim a particular and privileged relationship with the US, ours is a genuinely unique one bound by a shared history, profound ties of kinship and common values. The closeness of the relationship is reflected in the access we enjoy at the highest political levels in the US – levels of access that few other countries of our size enjoy.

At its heart, it is a relationship based on people. In every corner of America there is Irish America and a sustained interest in Ireland. Ireland thus enjoys a unique community of people with a shared ancestral identity that they value and that motivates them.

The overwhelming majority of the 41 million Irish Americans are made up of Americans of Irish ancestry. There is a continuing decline in the Irish-born population which now probably comprises less than a quarter of a million.

Irish America is not a monolith. It comprises people with differing levels of interest and connection to Ireland spanning many generations. It is economically diverse and geographically distributed. It gives its support to both the Democratic and Republican parties. While the demographics of the US are changing, Irish Americans nonetheless comprise, and will continue to comprise, a sizeable and important ethnic group in an increasingly diverse nation, presenting opportunities for partnership in local communities across America.

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Since the birth of America's independence, successive Irish leaders have turned to the US time and again for leadership and support as the modern Irish state was born and its founding fathers strove for political and economic stability.

While relations between Ireland and Irish America have always been close, this relationship in the past has tended to be defined against a backdrop of political upheaval and economic deprivation. This is no longer the case. We need now to build a new relationship with Irish America that will serve Ireland and Irish America well for future generations.

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Ireland. The relationship is two-way and needs to be cultivated and nurtured in a sensitive and mutually beneficial way. At all costs, we must preserve and protect the links and engender a common appreciation of the wider Irish family and shared heritage.

8. Recognition and Acknowledgement: The Need for New Initiatives

Irish identity is not confined to birthplace but extends to families and their descendants. The Irish Constitution states that the "Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage".

We must invest new energy to give expression to the Constitution's outreach to our diaspora. The concern is that given recent immigration trends and the small numbers of Irish born, Americans of Irish descent are increasingly further removed from their Irish roots.

The current economic downturn represents a timely opportunity to look again at our overseas communities, particularly in the US, and to see how this valuable resource can be elevated to a new and even more dynamic level

In taking forward a new strategy, we are fortunate in building on a solid foundation. Successive Irish Governments over several decades in partnership with our diaspora have enjoyed a stature and impact disproportionate to the size of our country. To many countries throughout the world, Ireland is a role model in this area.

The significant part played by Irish America in advancing the Northern Ireland peace process is recognized as a particular example of the enormous impact which a highly motivated and committed diaspora can have. The current economic downturn represents a timely stimulus to look again at our overseas communities, particularly in the US, and to see how this valuable resource can be elevated to a new and even more dynamic level.

A number of conferences have reflected on the issues surrounding better diaspora recognition and how we maintain and develop the connections between Ireland and its extended families abroad, particularly in the US. There is so much benefit to be derived from this connection and engagement that new and imaginative ways to connect and stay connected with our diaspora need to be developed.

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We need to open a new dialogue, appropriate to this time and the level of maturity that we have reached as a country, that will ease the frustration felt among many in the diaspora that more should be done to recognise their interests and needs and in so doing better serve the interests of Ireland.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs is looking at a number of initiatives involving our global Irish community aimed at helping to address the current economic situation. The Irish American business leadership is, of course, central to any such initiatives and it can be anticipated that they will wish to play their part in working closely with us in support of the economy. This can only serve to strengthen further the relationship between Irish America and Ireland and perhaps also help identify and bring forward future leaders in the community committed to developing relations, particularly in the economic area.

The role of the President of Ireland has been central to highly successful and regular, meaningful, engagement with the Irish diaspora in the United States and beyond. The President's leadership in this area is a precious and greatly appreciated resource. The President's visits to the US also play a vital part in promoting Ireland's interests in the

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economic arena. Further targeted visits over the next two years in particular will be of immense value.

Over the years, consideration has also been given to Irish Government recognition for those in the United States who have made a particular contribution to Ireland whether through business, culture or community involvement.

The success and the further plans for expansion of events that confer recognition of achievement on Irish Americans, such as Irish America Magazine's Wall Street 50 as well as the role of the American Ireland Fund, the Ireland-US Council, the Irish Chamber and publications such as the Irish Voice, Irish Echo and Irish Examiner in honouring achievement, are concrete evidence of a yearning for acknowledgement and deserve ongoing support.

The desirability of establishing a suitable mechanism for the State to appropriately recognise persons who make a significant contribution to Ireland-US relations or within Irish America, is something that should be looked at afresh. It is noteworthy the extent to which other countries can recognise members of our community and we cannot do so. We do have uniquely Irish models for acknowledging achievement, such as Aosdána in the Arts, and these should be reviewed with a view to adapting an appropriate model for recognising members of our diaspora.

Under current law, Irish citizenship is no longer available for the great majority of Americans of Irish ancestry. Conscious of the need to keep our ties strong with this entire ancestral group, both now and in the future, we should look at ways of encouraging and facilitating people, who are not entitled to citizenship, to give expression to their Irish ancestry. One such measure could be a new certificate of Irish ancestry which, while having no legal standing as such, would constitute official recognition for many people of their familial and emotional connection with Ireland.

Consideration could also be given to establishing a fast track naturalisation regime for those with Irish great-grandparents who, although not eligible for citizenship by virtue of descent, have demonstrated a particular affinity with Ireland having spent time in Ireland as students, with the time, or a portion of the time spent in Ireland as a student, exceptionally counting towards residency in Ireland requirements of the naturalisation process.

Genealogical information is in constant demand. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has agreed on the need to engage with relevant stakeholders in this field to provide the maximum level of records on the internet on a gratis basis as a way of encouraging people of Irish background to visit and further develop their links with Ireland. The putting online of the 1911 Dublin census and the number of hits it has attracted so far is evidence of the popularity of family history today. We should also engage with the Churches in Ireland about putting their records online for the Irish diaspora.

We should also, in an innovative and practical way, seek to facilitate frequent visitors from the US to Ireland, who are not Irish passport holders, through immigration either on arrival at Irish Airports or by way of pre-clearance at US Airports

We should also, in an innovative and practical way, seek to facilitate frequent visitors from the US to Ireland, who are not Irish passport holders, through immigration either on arrival at Irish Airports or by way of pre-clearance at US Airports. Through something like a frequent visitor stamp, or presentation of a certificate of Irish ancestry along with a US passport, it should be possible to ensure more expeditious passage while at the same time conferring some additional recognition to the connection that many such individuals have with Ireland.

The Irish Famine occupies a very important place in the minds of very many Irish Americans and it is suggested that there be an annual programme of events in the US to augment and support national commemoration day activities. This could be linked to the role that Irish Aid and Irish aid agencies play today in tackling want. The Embassy and Consulates will coordinate to initiate such a programme to mark our shared history.

9. Connecting and Staying In Touch: Availing Of New Technologies

The bridge between the United States and Ireland is increasingly an information super-highway with much potential. The technology now exists to link people together in unprecedented numbers.

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There are a number of young professional Irish networks in the United States that the Government has supported which

give people the chance to link and stay connected with like-minded Irish friends and colleagues. Such initiatives are also now established elsewhere around the world. These networks are evidence of a desire for the Irish, wherever they may be, to remain in touch with one another and also with Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland, in particular, has done substantial work in encouraging and developing Irish business networks overseas, supporting more than sixty worldwide, including many in the United States.

There is significant and increasing interest in using the power of the web to link our diaspora. The Minister for Foreign Affairs is currently considering a number of private sector proposals for global networks which would provide an online link for Irish communities in the US and beyond. Any new initiative in this area should seek to build on the extensive networks already in existence by offering practical added value. In line with international best practice, the Government should continue to offer guidance and support for initiatives of this nature.

It is in the Government's interest that the full potential of these initiatives become established. If successful, they would represent an invaluable resource in connecting with our community and in staying connected in a productive and technologically innovative way. This is something that merits ongoing consideration in the context of our diaspora strategy.

10. Immigration: New Arrangements Needed

Ireland US bilateral visa arrangements should be an integrated element of a comprehensive Irish American policy designed to foster cultural, social and economic links between Ireland and the United States.

We hope that the issue of comprehensive immigration reform will be pursued by the new Congress and we will continue to advocate in favour of such an outcome.

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Today, young Irish people have opportunities to travel widely. While many continue to come to the US under the J1 summer work programme, the numbers have decreased significantly since the 1970s and 1980s. A valuable bilateral connection has accordingly been

weakened. It is very much in the interests of mutual understanding that young people continue to travel and have an opportunity to live and work temporarily and experience our respective ways of life. A combined initiative is required to breathe new life into the J1 programme.

More recently, Ireland and the US have agreed a new bilateral visa arrangement to facilitate longer and more flexible stays by younger people from both countries. This bilateral twelve month work and travel arrangement, agreed in September 2008, is a major step forward. It offers the opportunity to people in post-secondary education and recent graduates to deepen and broaden their understanding of Ireland and the United States.

The Government also wishes to see new formal bilateral visa arrangements that reflect the historic links between the two countries and the mutually beneficial economic and social links of the modern era.

We would like to secure bilateral visa arrangements that would provide an opportunity for Irish and American citizens to stay for extended periods in both countries. The Government is, therefore, seeking support in Congress for a new visa arrangement that will facilitate, on a reciprocal basis, Irish and American citizens taking up employment for renewable periods of two years.

Resolving the status of the undocumented remains a key Government priority. Many Irish remain undocumented in the US and live their lives under conditions of enormous stress. While recognizing that the issue of immigration reform remains politically sensitive and challenging, we must continue to work with the Administration and our friends in Congress towards a solution which would allow the undocumented to fully contribute to society and to travel freely between their homes in the United States and Ireland.

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11. Supporting the Irish-born communities in the US

Arising out of the Report of the Task Force on Emigrants in 2002, the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs was established in 2004 as a significant response to many of the needs of the Irish abroad. The Unit, since its establishment, has focused on increasing the capacity of Irish organizations abroad to deliver frontline services to our

emigrants in need of assistance. In recent years, it has also broadened its agenda to include substantial investment in the heritage, social and cultural life of our communities abroad, aimed at ensuring that the diaspora's links with Ireland remain vibrant.

Since the establishment of the Irish Abroad Unit, the government has directed more than \$10 million to support Irish community organizations and projects in the United States, with \$5 million allocated in 2008 alone. While the focus of this funding has been on supporting key frontline welfare services, there has also been a substantial investment in community and heritage projects, including strategic capital developments.

Since the establishment of the Irish Abroad Unit, the government has directed more than \$10 million to support Irish community organizations and projects in the United States, with \$5 million allocated in 2008 alone

These investments reflect the enormous value the Government places on supporting Irish communities and Irish people in the United States and of its firm commitment to building closer ties with the Irish American community.

Assistance to those Irish immigrants in need will continue to reflect changing immigration patterns and profiles and to demonstrate a practical compassion for our most vulnerable older immigrants. It will remain a priority for the Government to take special care of these sometimes "forgotten Irish" who were the standard bearers at a time when Ireland could not offer them a stable future at home. Many are lonely and isolated. Reaching these immigrants, identifying their needs and responding to those needs must be a priority, undertaken in partnership with the wider Irish American community and with government representatives at Federal, State and local level.

The Irish Community Centres supported by Government funding provide key outreach and advisory services to the undocumented and otherwise disadvantaged members of the Irish community. Younger members of the community are also a focus with the Government partnering with the GAA in developing sporting facilities for Irish communities. The Government has also supported the work of the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform (ILIR), the main lobby group for the undocumented Irish in the United States, with grants totalling \$235,000 since 2006.

12. Education: Generating Potent Links

Education, and particularly time spent studying in Ireland, is a potent means of generating lasting and sometimes hugely beneficial links. The UK economy, for example, benefits to the tune of £5 billion annually from international students.

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Irish Universities in the US have worked effectively and pro-actively to establish a profile for Irish education which enjoys such a high reputation. Within third level education in particular, there has been a sustained period of growth with considerable potential for further expansion given the relative affordability of Irish college education compared to the US.

Education opportunity in Ireland should be developed even more in the years ahead. Current statistics show that amongst approximately 12,000 non-Irish third level students in Ireland, 20% - more than any single country - come from the US. While much of this activity has been of a short-term nature, Irish universities have developed recruitment strategies over recent years aimed at attracting US students to full degree programmes in Ireland.

In view of the traditional two-way migration flows between the two countries and in recognition of the role played by our countries in each other's history, students from the US who wish to spend time studying in Ireland should be exempted from any more general visa requirements that may be brought in following the detailed review currently underway of the immigration regime applying to non-European students.

There are some 10 million Irish Americans under the age of 18 and there are many others who, while not Irish, have an interest in Ireland

There are some 10 million Irish Americans under the age of 18 and there are many others who, while not Irish, have an interest in Ireland. There is scope for a coordinated approach among the universities and higher education institutes to publicizing and promoting the higher education sector in Ireland and for generating a single web source dedicated to the US marketplace to help US students identify and select education opportunities in Irish universities.

All Irish Universities have been developing links throughout the United States which allows them to connect with their alumni and build strategic partnerships. In view of the high

potential of this sector, consideration might be given to the appointment by the Universities of a full-time representative to coordinate their activities in the US.

The Embassy in Washington should also, on a pilot basis, have a diplomatic member of staff with specific responsibility for the education sector who would seek to ensure the greatest possible level of economic benefit from this sector for Ireland. Both the Study Abroad programmes and the more recent initiatives to promote full degree programmes have considerable scope for expansion. We are keen, in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Universities Association (IUA), to play a greater role in the generic promotion of the Irish education brand in the US.

Working in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Universities Association, the Embassy in Washington would be glad to help organize and host an early dialogue on the future of Ireland-US relations in the area of higher education and research.

More could be done to engage Irish and American students at secondary and high school levels. In this context there is considerable potential for the development of schools linkages using information technology. There would be merit in the development of a new module for use in schools in Ireland on the extraordinary contribution of the Irish abroad and the continuing importance of the link between our community in America and Ireland today. Contact should be made with the Co-ordinator of the Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE) module in secondary schools with a view to having suitable material circulated to some secondary schools on a trial basis in 2009/10, with the ultimate aim of having the topic included as part of the "Ireland in the World" unit of the CSPE programme. This could include an element of group or project work in conjunction with interested schools in the US. There is also potential for linkages with US schools, Irish schools and communities in countries in receipt of Irish aid funds.

13. Irish Studies: An Area of Growth and Opportunity

One of the growth areas in Irish America has been the evolution of Irish studies programmes. Demand for these programmes is high as is the demand for American students to visit Ireland as part of these programmes.

One of the growth areas in Irish America has been the evolution of Irish studies programmes

Very successful programmes of the highest quality involving several thousand students annually have been established including in Boston College, Notre Dame (the Keough-Naughton Institute), New York and Fordham Universities, Catholic University in Washington DC and various other institutions throughout the US. They are clear evidence of a new generation of Irish Americans keen to embrace their ethnic heritage. These programmes and the interest they generate build on the work of the American Conference on Irish Studies (ACIS) and are invaluable in familiarising a new and eager generation of university educated Americans with Ireland and Irish culture; they should be encouraged and supported in every way possible.

The Government should actively encourage benefactors in the US to consider supporting Irish studies at US universities

The Government should actively encourage benefactors in the US to consider supporting such programmes of Irish studies at US universities.

These developments are matched by a growth in diaspora studies in Irish universities and by welcome new initiatives such as the John Hume Institute for Global Irish studies at UCD. Yet more needs to be done in Ireland to deepen understanding of this aspect of our own historical experience. Academic resources and experience could be pooled, for example, towards an annual summer school addressing neglected aspects of the Irish emigrant experience in the US such as the Scots Irish, the Irish American contribution to the Labour Movement or the unique, but infrequently told, stories of the Irish in the mining communities of Wyoming and Montana.

The fifty-two year old Fulbright scholarship programme is the principal vehicle for intergovernmental exchange, with a legislative basis. It is the only two way programme and has benefited over 1600 Irish scholars, academics and post graduate students as well as over 600 similar Americans. It has given both sets of beneficiaries unrivalled understanding of each others' country. Recently, the teaching of the Irish language has become eligible for

Fulbright grants and seven awards have been made to Irish teachers in 2009. Irish is taught in over 50 third level American institutions.

The Mitchell scholarships are also creating a new generation of leaders who have studied in Ireland. The financial support that the Government has made available to the US-Ireland Alliance in support of these scholarships is a clear demonstration of the worth and significance that Ireland attaches to this programme. Already, some one hundred young American students, of exceptionally high calibre, have studied at high levels in Irish Universities, North and South, under this programme. This is an investment which is destined to deliver a real dividend in Ireland's favour over time.

There is also considerable scope to add to these existing efforts through a new leadership development programme between Ireland and the United States. This targeted initiative would seek to identify, on an annual basis, a small number of emerging US leaders in politics, business, journalism and the arts who could be introduced over the course of a week or so to their counterparts in Ireland in a Government-led programme. Similar programmes exist in other European countries and have been very successful in building closer relations at the highest levels of society.

There is also considerable scope to add to these existing efforts through a new leadership development programme between Ireland and the United States

The work of the Washington-Ireland Programme, which since its inception some fifteen years ago has facilitated some 350 young Irish people from North and South with summer internships in Washington, provides an excellent model on which to build. In this context consideration could also be given to further developing the existing internship programme run by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), in which 25-30 students annually from Northeastern University (Boston), De Paul University (Chicago) and the Catholic University of America (Washington DC) spend a semester working in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

It is very much in the interests of Ireland to maintain and promote these extraordinary levels of interest – in the Irish language, history, music, dance and sports - that continue to exist despite, in some cases, increasingly attenuated family links with Ireland

There is significant and enduring interest in the Irish language across the US at both academic and Irish community level. It acts as an additional, potent attraction to a sense of Irishness for a committed, if minority, group of Irish Americans. In most major Irish American cities, Irish classes and activities are offered. According to the US census, Irish is a

home language for over 30,000 people and some US cities have significant expatriate Gaeltacht communities. Continued Government support for the Fulbright Irish language scholars would be a cost effective way of ensuring and supporting the growth of interest in the language.

It is very much in the interests of Ireland to maintain and promote these extraordinary levels of interest – in the Irish language, history, music, dance and sports - that continue to exist despite, in some cases, increasingly attenuated family links with Ireland.

14. Culture and Sport: Adding To Our Stature

Leading Irish authors, film makers, playwrights, poets, musicians and other performers have always had a very high level of visibility and popularity across the broad American community. Our cultural reputation and profile are assets that cannot be underestimated. So too is Ireland's success in sport whether, for example, in the hosting of the Special Olympics or the golfing achievements of Pádraig Harrington.

The strength and size of Irish America and the natural affinity in the wider American public towards Ireland provide Ireland with a unique advantage.

The practical benefits are many: a strong Irish cultural and sporting presence builds Ireland's image in the US; promotes tourism; accounts for sizeable direct revenue; helps promote Ireland economically as a centre of creativity and excellence and innovation; and is a significant source of media coverage.

***Culture is the means
by which most
Americans now
encounter Ireland***

Ireland has enjoyed an upsurge in creativity and excellence across all art forms in recent years. This has made a strong and positive impact in the US. Irish literature has huge and enduring appeal. Irish theatre also enjoys extraordinary success. This – added to our strong traditions in music and dance - gives us a cultural footprint in the US that is the envy of many.

Indeed, culture is the means by which most Americans now encounter Ireland.

Culture Ireland has made a real impact in promoting the Irish Arts in the United States and promoting and assisting Irish artists and companies. In promoting Ireland's cultural profile abroad it has given top priority to the US, with new strategic initiatives such as an annual performing arts trade mission to New York. It works closely with the Embassy and Consulates, and its role for the future will be vital. Notwithstanding this, those who promote and represent our cultural excellence do so for the most part with only very modest government support.

We need to actively explore how we can do better in this vastly underexploited field and we need to invest in the infrastructure that best allows us to do so

We need to actively explore how we can do better in this vastly underexploited field and we need to invest in the infrastructure that best allows us to do so. New York, for example, is a global capital for the arts and a vital platform for Irish culture. It is also a highly competitive environment. Our partners in Europe are acutely aware of this. The French, British, Germans, Spanish, Scandinavians and many newer EU members have all invested heavily in their cultural infrastructure in the city with dedicated cultural centres.

If we have achieved success disproportionate to our size, it is from a position of comparative disadvantage. Yet we do have invaluable resources for example the American Irish Historical Society, Glucksman Ireland House at New York University (NYU), the Irish Arts Center, the Irish Repertory Theatre and other important centres in the US. We must be prepared to invest in and develop these resources.

It is very timely to take stock of the advantageous cultural resources that currently exist for Ireland and to look at new ways to take forward our cultural profile in America

It is very timely to take stock of the advantageous cultural resources that currently exist for Ireland and to look at new ways to enhance our cultural profile in America.

The Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism plays the key role in considering how we can build our cultural presence to maximum practical benefit. Within the cultural community in the US, Gabriel Byrne has been our strongest advocate for a review and his guidance will be crucial.

One of the most pressing issues for consideration is whether there is potential for partnerships with Irish American business and with City and State authorities to develop

Ireland's cultural infrastructure, especially in New York, where we are already lagging behind our competitors.

We should also look at enhancing Irish programming in the front rank national art, theatre and performance spaces. The "Treasures of Ireland" exhibition in 1986, for example, had a major impact in promoting Ireland in the US. Such projects take time to plan and implement but 2011 could be a year in which a series of high-profile events could help reposition Ireland in the US in a very positive way.

One of the greatest investments we can make is through the promotion of younger Irish artists, writers and performers in the US

One of the greatest investments we can make is through the promotion of outstanding younger Irish artists, writers and performers in the US. This has rightly been a priority for Culture Ireland and deserves every support.

Strong support is also essential for those organisations, such as Comhaltas and the Irish American Cultural Institute, that bring Irish culture to smaller communities across the US.

Particular attention is also required for those art forms that are less well known in the US but that can enable us reach new and influential audiences – contemporary art, music and dance in particular.

A strong Irish profile in Washington DC is critical to our interests and cultural promotion plays a key role in this.

Our cultural presence and projection in the United States is an asset to be nurtured and developed

Many countries have re-developed their Embassy and Consulate buildings with the objective of allowing them showcase the best of their arts and culture. Sweden, for instance, opened their flagship "House of Sweden" in Washington D.C. last year which, in a high profile and modern setting, allows a broad audience experience at first hand the very best of the Swedish architecture, art, culture, design, fashion and technical innovation.

Obviously, resources are an issue, now more than ever. But our cultural presence and projection in the United States is an asset to be nurtured and developed. The development of a new Irish Cultural Institute, dedicated to the promotion and coordination of Irish cultural and educational outreach in the United States, and also perhaps Ireland's experience of

peace building, should be energetically taken forward. Such an Institute could be allied to the establishment of a new Embassy premises in Washington (discussed later in this Review).

In the meantime, efforts would be greatly benefited by the presence of at least one dedicated cultural professional who could better direct and coordinate our country-wide cultural activities. This modest investment would allow us do a much better job in flying the cultural flag and offer new opportunity to generate enhanced dividends for Ireland. There is also scope for strengthening sporting links, not only through the development and exchange of youth teams (a notable success for the GAA in America in recent years) but also through exhibition games such as those that have brought American college and Professional Football teams to Ireland and the GAA All Stars and Munster Rugby teams to the US.

15. Political Relations and Peace in Northern Ireland

In a statement in the course of the election campaign last September, then Senator Obama welcomed this review of Ireland-US relations.

Northern Ireland has been a priority issue for the Irish Government in the US and for the best part of 30 years Ireland's relations with Irish America and the US Government has been defined by this issue. A great deal of Irish government time and energy was dedicated to addressing the challenges arising from this painful and difficult period.

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This has helped shape a rigorous and effective Irish Government presence in the US. It yielded access to high political office, including the White House unrivalled even by far larger countries and conferred purpose on our representations in Congress and our relations with the Irish American community.

The annual traditional St Patrick's Day lunch on Capitol Hill hosted by the Speaker and attended by the Taoiseach and the US President is a truly unique high profile occasion symbolic of the many links between the two countries.

Acknowledging the strong bilateral ties between Ireland and the United States, President Obama has maintained the tradition of inviting the Taoiseach to the White House on St Patrick's Day. Over the years these occasions have given Ireland generous access to the President and members of his Administration. In addition to the ceremonial and symbolic elements to these occasions, there is substantial and invaluable opportunity to engage on all current bilateral and international issues. President Obama has said that his Administration will be a "good friend" of Ireland and looks forward to building on the relationship between Ireland and the United States "in a way that treats the Irish as the full partners that they are."

Acknowledging the strong bilateral ties between Ireland and the United States, President Obama has maintained the tradition of inviting the Taoiseach to the White House on St Patrick's Day

President Obama is also committed to continuing US support for solidifying the peace process in Northern Ireland and to the reappointment of a US Special Envoy. The role of the US Special Envoy continues to be important and ensures the presence of a key person at the heart of the Administration mandated to address Irish issues.

We also welcome the commitment of the President to visit Ireland during his term of office. This visit will offer unparalleled opportunity to bring relations between the two countries to new levels of cooperation and friendship.

Over many years, and on a bipartisan basis, successive Administrations and the Congress have played a key role in the path to peace in Ireland - a role about which Irish-America are justifiably proud, and for which Ireland is profoundly grateful.

One of the great dividends of the Good Friday Agreement has been the extent to which it has reconciled our diaspora, most particularly in the United States, with the Ireland of today

One of the great dividends of the Good Friday Agreement has been the extent to which it has reconciled our diaspora, most particularly in the United States, with the Ireland of today.

Even if less demanding than heretofore, the progress achieved in Northern Ireland must continue to be tended and promoted

Even if less demanding than heretofore, the progress achieved in Northern Ireland must continue to be tended and promoted. We will do so actively. The Government has directed that every possible assistance be extended to the Northern Ireland Executive and to work in close

partnership with colleagues working on behalf of the Executive in the United States. We have a common purpose – to underpin the peace process and to ensure the continuing success of the Good Friday Agreement.

The promotion of genuine and lasting reconciliation in Ireland, North and South, remains a key challenge. While enormous strides have been made in recent years in building peace in Northern Ireland, important work remains to be done to consolidate and sustain that peace. The United States will continue to be an important source of support for such efforts and our friends in Irish America and the wider United States can make an essential contribution to taking forward this important work.

The bipartisan Friends of Ireland in Congress has been an enormous and indispensable resource in support of the peace process. We are working closely with the Friends of Ireland to consolidate existing relations, including through enhanced engagement between the Congress and the Oireachtas, and are engaging in active outreach with newer members of the 111th Congress on a range of issues, particularly in the economic sphere. Further developing our contacts in Congress and the Administration beyond Irish American friends and interlocutors remains an important priority.

The financial assistance extended by the US to the International Fund for Ireland is a particularly positive manifestation of the support of successive Administrations and Congress. As this initiative moves towards completion, it would certainly be worthwhile exploring both with the incoming Administration and with our friends in Congress whether any new forms of cooperation, perhaps in the area of conflict resolution, might be possible.

The bipartisan Friends of Ireland in Congress have been an enormous and indispensable resource in support of the peace process

16. Meeting Our Foreign Policy Goals: More Structured Dialogue

The wider EU relationship with the United States, and to a lesser extent our bilateral relationship, are both important in the pursuit of Irish foreign policy objectives.

It is obvious that the United States and Ireland, due to the huge disparity in size, do not have the same range of national interests or the scale of resources that can be deployed in their defence or pursuit.

We have, however, a shared interest and priority in ensuring effective international action to tackle the threats to global peace, security and prosperity which are becoming increasingly transnational in nature and which affect us all.

We have a shared interest and priority in ensuring effective international action to tackle the threats to global peace, security and prosperity which are becoming increasingly transnational in nature and which affect us all

The United States and Ireland are both members of the United Nations and the Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Ireland is not, of course, a member of NATO, probably the primary US vehicle for co-operation with European partners. At the same time, our excellent record of participation in UN-mandated peace support operations, including currently alongside the US in Kosovo and Afghanistan, is well-understood and respected, and remains an area where Ireland can be seen to make an effective contribution.

On issues such as climate change, terrorism, disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the eradication of poverty and the spread of disease, it is increasingly clear that no one country or region can alone hope to develop an adequate response or afford to try.

Partnership with the United States will be a prerequisite in meeting these challenges.

The election of a new Administration in the US and its renewed commitment to a more active multilateral approach and cooperative role with its partners in Europe and elsewhere has given rise to huge interest and heightened expectation all across the globe.

Together with our partners in the European Union, we look forward to a renewed EU-US dialogue and a stronger and more effective transatlantic partnership.

Honest and open exchange is important and understood but Ireland's credentials as a good and trusted friend of the United States should never be in doubt or brought into question

At the same time, we also look forward to the further development of our bilateral dialogue on a range of international issues, including development assistance and meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals, human rights, disarmament and non-proliferation and conflict resolution.

There are always issues on which there can be differing views, sometimes sharply so. Honest and open exchange is important and understood but Ireland's credentials as a good and trusted friend of the United States should never be in doubt or brought into question.

We have a real interest in ensuring that there is the greatest level of mutual understanding between our countries at government and parliamentary levels and between our peoples

We have a real interest in ensuring that there is the greatest level of mutual understanding between our countries at government and parliamentary levels and between our peoples. Our engagement on many issues would benefit from a more structured dialogue so that areas of difference and common interest can be more fully explored.

Building on the pattern of engagement in recent years, we should aim to structure regular dialogue on foreign policy matters both at political level, between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State, and at senior official level.

With the US administration, we should look for specific opportunities for practical cooperation. One such area may be Conflict Resolution. We would intend to explore the possibility of regular contacts between the Conflict Resolution Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the US Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilisation which is charged with coordinating US efforts in preventing, resolving and transforming conflict. Another tangible way of enhancing our partnership is through the officer exchange programme that is being initiated between the State Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Other issues will arise from time to time. For instance, the question of how European countries, including Ireland, might assist the US to deal with the consequences of the closure of Guantanamo Bay, is currently very live and is under active consideration at EU level.

The emphasis on development by the Obama administration also offers new opportunity for greater cooperation between the US and Ireland

The emphasis on development by the Obama administration also offers new opportunity for greater cooperation between the US and Ireland. Ireland's record in the developing world, and especially Africa, has been recognised internationally for many years. The leadership role

being taken by Ireland internationally on the global hunger crisis has particular resonance in the US. There is considerable scope for stronger cooperation between Ireland and the US in support of the UN Millennium Development Goals. We will pursue specific initiatives in order to develop cooperation on development issues, with a strong focus on Africa, the fight against poverty and hunger, HIV and AIDS, human rights and conflict resolution.

17. Irish Government Presence in the US: Upgrading and Developing

One way in which we could better showcase Ireland is through the physical infrastructure that houses our representation in the United States.

While the new economic realities are uppermost in our consciousness, there is a great deal to be said for developing, at some time in the future, a landmark Embassy premises in Washington DC that would give a new, more vibrant, image to the country and allow greater space to showcase Ireland and support Irish business. It would also accommodate a new Irish Cultural Institute and greatly enhance our capacity to promote our rich cultural assets. While the current Embassy building is well-situated, it has many limitations and cannot be adapted to the standard now necessary, including the requirements of Ireland's next presidency of the EU.

One way in which we could better showcase Ireland is through the physical infrastructure that houses our representation in the United States

It is noteworthy the extent to which many countries, including in particular some of the newer members States of the EU, have upgraded their infrastructure and physical presence in Washington. Finland has developed an Embassy premises with a "green", environmentally friendly, emphasis which is striking and which might offer a good model for us while Sweden has developed a new Sweden House complex which is particularly prominent and noteworthy.

It is accepted that activation of this idea will have to await more advantageous financial circumstances. In the meantime, however, the matter would benefit from ongoing reflection and professional and local advice.

As budget demands necessitate difficult choices in our overseas diplomatic presence, the importance of our relationship with the US needs to be borne in mind

By any standards we are also on the modest end of the spectrum in terms of the investment we make in personnel resources.

As budget demands necessitate difficult choices in our overseas diplomatic presence, the importance of our relationship with the US needs to be borne in mind. If anything, as we increasingly prioritise in favour of our more strategic and important relationships, there are compelling grounds for upgrading our relatively modest investment in personnel and budgets in the US.

Despite the huge changes both in Ireland and the United States, our diplomatic presence and focus here has remained unchanged since the opening of our Missions here in 1920s and 30s. The Embassy and the four Consulates (New York, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco) cover a vast geographical area assisted by a small number of Honorary Consulates. Our footprint is modest compared to most other countries.

Despite the huge changes both in Ireland and the United States, our diplomatic presence and focus here has remained unchanged since the opening of our Missions here in 1920s and 30s

In the future, a strategy better and more tightly focussed on individual US states that are a “good fit” for Ireland is called for. And there are many such states which are well-related to Ireland in terms of scale, approaches to education, investment and industry and with political leadership and state governments that relate well to us. For a country of our size and scale it is essential that we target our energies. Our Embassy and Consulates in the US need, therefore, to prioritise states, and if necessary do so on a rotational basis, to better get to know and partner with them at all levels.

Our current representation in America is limited particularly in the south of the US. Any expansion of our existing Consulate network must, of course, particularly in the current financial climate, be subject to a strong business case being presented but, resources permitting, there is a strong case for addressing our very limited presence through the opening, in the first instance, of a new Consulate in Atlanta (GA). The opening of a new Consulate in Houston (TX) should also be seriously considered.

There is a strong case for addressing our very limited presence through the opening of new Consulates in Atlanta (GA) and Houston (TX)

Both Atlanta and Houston are major cities of real economic and investment significance and potential for Ireland with the latter occupying a position of some centrality in the global energy field.

Many of the southern US states have been engines of economic growth over the last two

decades. They are also increasingly home to many Irish Americans who have drifted from the more traditional centres of Irish population. These areas are currently served by our Consulates in New York and Chicago respectively. The opening of new Consulates would free up our Consulates in New York and Chicago and allow them better concentrate on priority states closer to hand.

The opening of a full-time Consulate in Atlanta would also allow for outreach and engagement with the Scots Irish, many of whom over the generations settled in Georgia and adjoining states. This is a constituency that should be more fully acknowledged both by the Government and also by the Northern Ireland Executive. There is scope for close North/South collaboration as we develop our presence in these states and engage in new ways to connect with those of Scots Irish extraction that are an important, but historically under-acknowledged, part of the wider Irish family in the United States.

A focused expansion of our Honorary Consul network should also now be addressed. Ireland currently has five Honorary Consuls in the US. By any standards, and by comparison with other countries in the US, this network is underdeveloped. We would see this number considerably expanding to ensure honorary representation (which comes at little cost to the State) in all the major locations where we do not have a permanent presence.

A focused expansion of our Honorary Consul network should also now be addressed

A core duty of the Embassy and Consulates is to serve and protect the interests of our citizens and to ensure high quality customer service in the delivery of those services. The significant numbers of Irish both resident in the US, those of Irish descent, and those travelling temporarily for business or tourism purposes require an efficient and timely consular service from the Irish diplomatic missions in the US.

We remain conscious of the need to continue to improve the level of customer service being offered and we will look at innovative ways to operate more efficiently and cost-effectively perhaps through options such as shared consular services by missions. The opening in particular of new-full time Consulates in Atlanta and Houston will offer new opportunity to redistribute the responsibilities of the Consulates in New York and Chicago and also explore cost saving shared service possibilities (for example in the areas of visas, citizenship, passports and accounting).

18. Building Common Purpose: A New Leadership Council

The links across America include the traditional networks of County Associations, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the GAA, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, Immigrant Advice Centres and others who have played, and still play, critical roles in both providing practical support to new emigrants and in creating a sense of community for so many Irish in the US.

Other prominent Irish-American networks include the American Ireland Fund, the Ireland-US Council, Irish Chamber and the Irish American Partnership that offer invaluable leadership as vital partners in connecting Ireland and America through philanthropy and business.

Latterly, newer Irish networks for professionals in various spheres, as well as many thriving organisations promoting traditional and contemporary Irish culture, have emerged which play an increasingly important role.

The work of all these organisations and networks represents an enormous resource for Ireland.

Many of these organisations are themselves also now reflecting on how they should refocus and develop for the future. Over the past thirty years and more, the American Ireland Fund, for example, has established a powerful and unique network driven by a hunger to promote peace and reconciliation in Ireland. Having achieved extraordinary success, they too are actively exploring their own future strategy.

The new circumstances of Ireland demand fresh and imaginative thinking and it is commendable the extent to which these organisations are seeking to keep apace and remain relevant.

An Irish American Leadership Council should be established under the patronage of the Taoiseach which would meet on a periodic basis under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Irish government is actively engaged with all of these organisations and has always been responsive to their priorities. For the future we must continue to offer guidance and support as those organisations address new priorities and meet fresh challenges. We should continue to make financial support available in appropriate cases.

Currently, there is no single umbrella body bringing together the leadership of Irish American organisations. An Irish American Leadership Council should be established under the patronage of the Taoiseach which would meet on a periodic basis under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This would act as a point for collective consultation and advice for the Government across a wide spectrum of issues of interest to the community and the Government. The membership would include the national leadership of Irish American business, community, philanthropic and cultural organisations throughout the United States.

The establishment of such a Council would be one way of giving meaningful and coherent expression to the Government's earnest wish to connect with our community in the widest sense and, in return, to benefit from feedback from such a collective grouping.

19. Direction at Political Level: A New Ireland-US Strategic Policy Group

For the future there would be merit in regular review at political level of Ireland-US relations. A new group should, therefore, be established under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs that would bring together on a periodic basis the key government Departments and agencies to ensure follow-up to this Review and to give political direction to the relationship, in particular its critically important economic dimension. This group, reporting to the Taoiseach and the Government, would also benefit from time to time from the inclusion in its deliberations of stakeholders from outside of government, including representatives of US and Irish business, for whom a positive and progressive relationship between Ireland and the US is important.

For the future there would be merit in regular review at political level of Ireland-US relations

20. A Note of Appreciation

We are grateful for the advice and input that we have received in the preparation of this Review from individuals and organisations throughout the United States and Ireland. There was a considerable level of interest in this initiative and we greatly benefited from the engagement and consultation that were such an important part of the Review process.

Annex 1

Summary of Main Recommendations

Our objectives:

- A revitalised relationship between Ireland and the United States, shaped to meet the challenges of a new era
- A strong and mutually beneficial economic partnership
- A deep and enduring engagement with the Irish diaspora in the US
- A vibrant Irish community with new possibilities for young people to work, gain experience and live in the United States
- A strong partnership with the Irish American community and with US authorities in caring for the 'forgotten Irish'
- Continued strong partnership with US Administration and Congress in support of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement

Implementation:

- A new Ireland-US Strategic Policy Group chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs
- A new Irish American Leadership Council under the patronage of the Taoiseach and chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Protecting jobs and preparing for growth:

- Extended diplomatic representation in the US, with, in the first instance, a new Consulate in Atlanta
- Expansion of the Honorary Consul network
- Development and expansion of business networks to support Irish jobs and take advantage of new economic opportunities
- Increase economic outreach including trade delegations led by the Taoiseach and senior Ministers
- Reinforce Embassy's capacity to promote economic relations
- Underline Ireland's place at the heart of the European Union to US political and business decision-makers

Supporting Irish citizens:

- Development of Ireland–US bilateral visa arrangements with a new reciprocal and renewable 2-year working visa arrangement, a reenergised J1 visa programme and a long term solution for the undocumented

Strengthening links with the Irish diaspora:

- Encouragement of new online links for Irish communities and the wider diaspora in the US
- Facilitation of frequent US visitors to Ireland through immigration at Irish airports
- A new mechanism for recognising outstanding contribution and achievement by members of the diaspora
- A new certificate of Irish ancestry for Americans seeking formal acknowledgement of their Irish roots
- A fast-track naturalisation regime for those with Irish great-grandparents who have studied in Ireland
- Improved on-line access to genealogical records
- Annual arrangements to commemorate the Famine in the US

Building a new generation of leaders

- A new leadership development programme to connect emerging leaders in the US with counterparts in Ireland
- Improved coordination of activities by Irish universities and Higher Education institutes
- Expanded internship programme for US students with reciprocal placements for Irish students
- Enhanced secondary school linkages and the development of curriculum materials in both the US and Ireland
- Support for growing Irish studies programmes and development of an annual Summer School focussing on aspects of the Irish story in America
- Officer exchange programme between the US State Department and Department of Foreign Affairs

- A dedicated education officer in the Embassy in Washington

Building Ireland's brand in the US

- Energise Ireland's 'brand' in the US and sharpen Ireland's image and profile
- Enhance Irish cultural programming with a series of high-profile events in 2011
- Invest in existing Irish-American cultural infrastructure, especially in New York
- Develop a dedicated Irish Cultural Institute in Washington when resources allow
- Appoint at least one dedicated professional cultural officer to coordinate US-wide activities
- Subject to resources, upgrade Ireland's Embassy in Washington

Building a closer political partnership

- Engagement with the Administration and with the Friends of Ireland in Congress around new opportunities for partnership between Ireland and the US
- Development of bilateral dialogue on issues ranging from development assistance, human rights, disarmament and non-proliferation to conflict resolution
- Establish structured, regular dialogue on foreign policy matters at Ministerial and official level
- Develop targeted engagement with individual US states