



## Press statement

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### **TAOISEACH MUST TELL EU LEADERS TO STOP RATIFICATION OF LISBON**

Taoiseach Brian Cowen must listen not only to his own people but also to his colleagues in Government. The Minister for Health and former PD leader Mary Harney has said she 'hoped other EU countries would not proceed with the ratification of the treaty as that would leave the Republic completely isolated'. Her analysis is correct and the only way to avoid such a scenario is for Mr Cowen to make it clear to his EU counterparts that Ireland cannot ratify this treaty and it is futile for the remaining countries to proceed. This is exactly what happened when the French and Dutch voted 'No' to the precursor to Lisbon, the constitutional treaty. The ratification process stopped because the governments of France and the Netherlands made it clear they could not ratify as their people has said 'No'. The Irish people deserve no less from their political leaders.

Mr Cowen must align himself with his own people and respect our vote by telling his EU colleagues that Ireland cannot ratify Lisbon so there is no point in the remaining states continuing with their ratifications. He must not, as his predecessor Bertie Ahern did with the Nice Treaty, align himself with the other EU heads of state against the Irish people, and urge them to proceed with their ratifications – indicating to them that Ireland, under pressure, will ratify Lisbon when everyone else has done so. Threats that the EU can proceed without us are unfounded; they need our consent to do so. Even the claim that they can do so under enhanced cooperation provisions is wrong as this only applies to the provisions of the Nice Treaty, and only to the areas where the use of Enhanced Cooperation is allowed. There is no possibility of 26 countries agreeing to isolate Ireland unless Mr Cowen gives the other EU heads of government the signal that they can do so.

Mr Cowen will be the only head of government at the EU summit with a direct democratic mandate on the Lisbon treaty. None of the others consulted their people on this treaty. Many EU leaders have admitted that they are afraid of what their own people would say if they were asked.

They need to face their fear and ask themselves what kind of EU do our people want and how can we best provide them with it?

That is the key to solving this dilemma. Reconsider what is necessary to reinstate the EU/EC in people's mind as a project people feel good about. This should be the demand that Brian Cowen brings to Brussels. He has nothing to be defensive about. His colleagues in Ireland – namely the voters – expect him to tell his colleagues at the summit that Lisbon is not the answer to what ails the organisation. The Laeken Declaration signed by all heads of government in December 2001 recognised this gap and promised to deal with it. Brian Cowen needs to remind them of that promise. He would be doing them a favour.

If the changes in the treaty are so important to the 27 countries, and we believe they are, then the consent of the people should be obtained. The people of Ireland came to the same view as the people of France and the Netherlands did on the precursor to Lisbon.

The Irish people have widespread support from citizens across the EU. Campaigners against the Lisbon Treaty, particularly in France and the Netherlands, see the Irish 'No' vote as an opportunity for real reform and want the ratification process on this twice-rejected proposal to stop.

International author and social justice campaigner Susan George, speaking on behalf of ATTAC France, has said: 'There is none more deaf than those who refuse to hear. You have a mouth to dictate to us but no ears to listen to the needs and requests of European citizens who demand a democratic Europe every time they are given the opportunity. You fear public opinion – and rightly so for it rejects you'.

The first time around, Gunter Verheugen, Vice-President of the EU Commission, said: 'Europe should not succumb to blackmail' – the views of the people. This time around, President José Manuel Barroso advised the various member states 'to continue with the process of ratification'! This is indeed blackmail and displays contempt for the democratic process. EU leaders appear ready to disregard their own rules and regulations instead of accepting the messages sent to them by their people.

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For further information:

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