



CHURCH of IRELAND GENERAL SYNOD
CHURCH in SOCIETY COMMITTEE
European Affairs Working Group

STATEMENT ON THE NICE REFERENDUM

The Church of Ireland Working Group on Europe has a vision of a European continent finally achieving an enduring peace within the framework of the European Union. For too long our continent has been devastated by total war, resulting in incalculable destruction, suffering and loss of life.

In view of the critical nature of the Irish decision, we consider that the electorate has a serious duty to consider the potential consequences of a 'No' vote.

We believe that Europe now finds itself at a crossroads in history, and that the Nice Agreement, however imperfect, provides a unique and possibly unrepeatable opportunity to achieve enduring peace.

The benefits of membership of the Union, particularly for those countries so long deprived under totalitarian regimes extend well beyond economic stability: they include, common spiritual and intellectual values, the dignity of the individual and the rule of law.

Through its close relationship with the Lutheran churches in the Baltic States, the Church of Ireland has been made keenly aware of their deep disappointment over Ireland's rejection of the Nice Treaty. Their concern is that a second rejection may prove fatal to those forces in their respective states which favour the enlargement process.

The Group endorses the statement made by the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops on the Treaty of Nice published on 8th October. We further commend for serious consideration the statements regarding the advantages of endorsing the Treaty issued by organisations representing trade unions, employers and farmers.