

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:

PROFESSOR PHILIP NOLAN, President, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, on 1 December 2011 in The Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*, on **Her Excellency ANNE ANDERSON**

A Sheánsailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle, is mór an onóir agus an pribhléid é domsa a Shoilse Anne Anderson a chur in aithne diaobh; Chancellor, members of the University, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour and a privilege to present to you Her Excellency Anne Andersen, and to outline her exceptional record of dedicated service to her country, over the course of an illustrious career as a leading member of our diplomatic service, a record of achievement that we are celebrating is a solemn and special way today through the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* by the National University of Ireland.



A native of Clonmel, County Tipperary, Anne proceeded to University College Dublin to gain that essential passport to a successful career in diplomatic service, the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History and Politics of the National University of Ireland. She subsequently graduated from King's Inns. She entered the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1972, within weeks of Ireland becoming a member of what is now the European Union, and over the last forty years she has been centrally involved in the most important developments in Irish foreign policy in an era marked by extraordinary challenge and change. There have been three central themes to Anne Anderson's contribution to diplomacy and public life: the process of building peace and resolving conflict in Northern Ireland, the development of the European Union, and our relationship with and involvement in the United Nations.

Anne was fortunate to join the Department of Foreign Affairs almost at the very moment of our accession to the European Economic Community, and to serve in the Economic Division of the Department from 1972 to 1976. The excitement of that time left her with a lasting impression of the extraordinary impact of the EU on the development of the Irish nation. She has later said "*I would regard our EU membership as being the most transformative event in Irish foreign policy since we achieved independence ... beyond the financial transfers, I have always held that the biggest gain was psychological. There was a new increment of confidence*"

Her first overseas posting was as First Secretary in the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva from 1976 to 1980, noteworthy as the first time a married woman in the Irish foreign service had been posted abroad. In this, as at many later points in her career, she was a pioneer. She also served in the Embassy in Washington from 1983 to 1987 before returning to Ireland to what

would prove to be a critical and formative role, as Counsellor in the Anglo-Irish Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs. This was two years after the breakthrough Anglo-Irish agreement, and while we are all aware of the public history of the slow road to peace, what we are not privy to are the myriad careful interventions by politicians, diplomats, public servants and civil society that mark out and pave that road. Her hard work in this role was, alongside many other dedicated public servants, vital to the process, but also was the setting in which Anne learned the intricate nature of peace building, and the need for an inclusive, rights-based and comprehensive approach.

Her more recent diplomatic career is dominated by her role in the EU and the UN, building on her early experiences to become one of Ireland's outstanding diplomats. She was Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva from 1995-2001, where her responsibilities also included periods as Chair of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights; Vice-President of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and Chair of the Trade Policy Review Body at the World Trade Organization. From 2001 to 2005, she served as Permanent Representative to the European Union in Brussels. Anne was in fact the first female Ambassador to the EU of any EU member state in the 45 years of its existence, and at the time the Financial Times reported she had "made history by sitting down". She was widely praised in this role, especially for her stewardship during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2004. From 2005 to 2009 she was Ambassador to France, where the Embassy became a meeting place for the French and Irish peoples to come together in new and creative ways.

Since 2009, Anne has been Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, and it is an indication of the esteem in which she is held that she was quickly asked to co-facilitate a review of the UN Peacebuilding machinery. She has brought to her current role a strong focus on human rights and humanitarian issues, and consistently presents Irish positions in a clear and principled way. One recent example, from a UN Security Council debate on Women, Peace and Security on 28 October, 2011, shows how she can bring the breadth of her prior experiences and her intellectual acuity to bear on the immediate issues of the day to make a particular, articulate, Irish contribution to world affairs. Speaking on the role of women in building peace and democracy she says:

"The Arab Spring provides a crucible for addressing the questions of representation and participation of women. Striking and inspirational early roles in Cairo, Benghazi and elsewhere have given way to a sense of women being side-lined. The risks for women are obvious: revolutions begin on the streets but, at a later stage, key decisions may be taken in smoke filled rooms. In that transition, women all too easily lose out: their courage helped to make the revolution but their inexperience of power can allow others to shape the outcomes"

Whether in multilateral diplomacy or in bilateral relations, she combines forensic attention to detail with an ability to see the big picture. A thread running through the performance of all her distinguished postings has been her deep sense of integrity and her unwavering commitment. She has approached the most sensitive of roles, such as chairing the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, or the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, with tact, stamina, judgment and intellectual rigour. In this sense she has displayed on the world stage a vivid example of the best characteristics of the Irish public service.

Her long, distinguished and pioneering service to our country, in the most demanding of roles, performed with rigour, integrity and panache, and leaving a

proud and lasting legacy, make Anne Anderson a public servant of whom we can be truly proud, and a most fitting recipient of the degree of Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.