

## The Elders call on Europe to play a stronger role in the Middle East

*The European Union can help revitalise the peace process,  
say Jimmy Carter and Mary Robinson in Dublin*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Elders met civil society groups, diplomats and members of the Irish government in Dublin today to discuss the role of Europe in the Middle East, the prospects for young people in Northern Ireland and other issues relevant to their work.

The Elders had lunch with the Tánaiste and Minister of Foreign Affairs Eamon Gilmore to inform him of their peace-building activities and hear about Ireland's foreign policy priorities. They will also have a meeting with President Michael D Higgins in the afternoon.

Earlier today, former Brazilian President **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**, former US President **Jimmy Carter** and former Irish President **Mary Robinson**, met privately with NGOs and European diplomats to explore Europe's role in reviving the two-state solution and the Middle East peace process.

**Jimmy Carter**, who led an [Elders' delegation to the Middle East](#) in October last year, said:

*"We had constructive discussions here in Dublin with the Irish Foreign Minister, European diplomats and civil society groups, all of whom are striving to protect prospects for a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel.*

*"With the Middle East peace process making no significant progress, we call on Europe to play a stronger and more independent role in revitalising peace efforts, with a fresh approach.*

*"The EU has repeatedly condemned settlement expansion in the West Bank. It could therefore introduce a clear labelling of products made in Israeli settlements, which are illegal under international law."*

**Mary Robinson** added:

*"People throughout Europe, in their capacity as consumers, have the power to reignite hope in the Middle East. Several European countries are already labelling differently products from Israel and goods made in illegal settlements. As Israel's largest trading partner, [the EU could send a strong signal by introducing clear, EU-wide labelling guidelines.](#)*

*“This is not an anti-Israel move, but a concrete step, supported by many of our Israeli friends, to revive the hope of a future state of Palestine and safeguard the two-state solution before it is too late.”*

While in Dublin, the Elders also held [a roundtable discussion with a group of young people from Northern Ireland](#). Although Northern Ireland is not a focus of their work as Elders, **Martti Ahtisaari**, former President of Finland, **Ela Bhatt**, founder of India’s Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) and **Gro Harlem Brundtland**, former Prime Minister of Norway, wanted to listen to and amplify youth voices working towards reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

**Gro Harlem Brundtland**, who chaired the roundtable, said:

*“Northern Ireland’s remarkable progress in the fifteen years since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement is an inspiration to the world.*

*“However, talking to young people who have grown up with the peace process showed us that a lot more needs to be done to build a truly inclusive society. They shared their disillusionment with a political system still dominated by sectarian interests. High levels of unemployment and continuing segregation leave young people in marginalised communities particularly vulnerable to violence and this is yet to be properly addressed.*

*“We were impressed by the remarkable commitment of the young people we met to building a peaceful, inclusive and culturally vibrant future for Northern Ireland. As Elders, we firmly believe that their voices must be heard and their interests must be represented by political leaders.”*

The Elders’ visit to Dublin follows an internal meeting of the organisation, in Ireland, to review their work programme and plan future activities.

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## About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Kofi Annan](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) (Chair).

[Nelson Mandela](#) is an honorary Elder.

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to [www.theElders.org](http://www.theElders.org).

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