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PRESS RELEASE

Joint Declaration of Protection for dignity at work and inclusive working environment

The Labour Relations Agency and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland welcome and endorse the Joint Declaration of Protection (for Dignity at Work and Inclusive Working Environment) launched by the NI Employment Relations Roundtable at the Spires Conference Centre, Assembly Buildings, Belfast.

Through the Declaration and as leaders of employment relations in Northern Ireland, the members of the Roundtable declare that everyone has a right to equality of opportunity in employment and the right to work in a harmonious and inclusive environment and atmosphere in which all workers are encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no worker feels under threat or experiences intimidation.

A Model Workplace Policy accompanies the Declaration and lists actions which all employers and trade unions are encouraged to adopt.

Speaking at the launch today, Marie Mallon, Chair of the Labour Relations Agency and Chair of the Northern Ireland Employment Relations Roundtable said, *“The LRA fully supports the commitment and determination of the NI Employment Relations Roundtable that everyone in the workplace has the right to work in a harmonious and inclusive environment free from threat and intimidation. The LRA will work with all parties to promote this very important declaration.”*

In welcoming the Declaration the Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Dr Michael Wardlow, said, *“The Equality Commission was delighted to be invited to engage with the working group to develop this Joint Declaration of Protection. We welcome the public demonstration of commitment by employers and trade unions to promoting and maintaining good and harmonious working environments. This is an important piece of work which continues to be relevant today, it highlights the need for continued vigilance in the workplace by both employers and employees. The Commission supports and endorses the revised Joint Declaration of Protection.”*

The Declaration and Model Workplace Policy are available to download from the Labour Relations Agency’s website www.lra.org.uk and the Equality Commission’s website www.equalityni.org

Notes to Editor:

1. NI Employment Relations Roundtable, Membership and Core Purpose

The Roundtable comprises a representative of the four lead employer organisations (Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of British industry, Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors) and four representatives from the Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The Roundtable is chaired by the Chair of the Labour Relations Agency and the Agency facilitates the work of the group.

The core purpose of the Northern Ireland Employment Relations Roundtable is: 'To be the principal advocate in promoting the strategic importance of strong and equitable Employment Relationships and Industrial Relations which:

- Contribute to the success of businesses;
- Improves the experience of employees/workers;
- Encourages collaborative partnerships between employees and their employers and
- Enhances Northern Ireland's economic competitiveness and social wellbeing.'

2. Labour Relations Agency

The Labour Relations Agency provides an impartial and confidential employment relations service to those engaged in industry, commerce and the public services. The Agency's services include the provision of advice on good employment practices and assistance with the development and implementation of employment policies and procedures. The Agency is also active in resolving disputes through its conciliation, mediation and arbitration services.

3. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission's powers and duties derive from a number of statutes which have been enacted over the last decades, providing protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. It also has responsibilities arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in respect of the statutory equality and good relations duties which apply to public authorities.

The Commission's sponsor Department is The Executive Office.