

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **DR HUGH BRADY**, NUI Vice-Chancellor and President, University College Dublin, on 2 November 2010 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*, on **LORD PATTEN OF BARNES**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Today the National University of Ireland honours Christopher Francis Patten, Lord Patten of Barnes. During an extraordinary career spanning over three decades Chris Patten has served as a highly influential and successful member of parliament, cabinet minister, party chairman, political strategist, European commissioner, university chancellor, author, commentator and international statesman. Chris Patten began his engagement with Irish affairs when he was appointed as Under Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office following the June 1983 general election. It was however his Chairmanship of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, set up as part of the Good Friday Agreement, that perhaps more than any other of his impressive contributions earned Chris Patten the gratitude and respect of the people of Ireland. The Commission, which reported in 1999, tackled the highly contentious and difficult issue of policing in a divided society. Chris Patten is a true friend to Ireland and the peoples of Northern Ireland.



Chris Patten, born in 1944, read Modern History at Balliol College, Oxford, and was elected a *Domus* Exhibitioner. In 1965 he won a Coolidge Travelling Scholarship to the USA. This early experience ignited in Patten a passion for politics and positive feelings towards the United States.

Chris Patten began a life-long engagement with politics and public affairs when he joined the Conservative Research Department in 1966. He served his political apprenticeship as Political Advisor to Lord Carrington and Lord Whitelaw when they were Chairmen of the Conservative Party. In 1974, he was appointed the youngest ever Director of the Conservative Research Department, a post he held until 1979.

Chris Patten entered the House of Commons as Member for Bath in 1979. This completed his transition from political advisor and researcher to politician. Political office soon followed. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Chris Patten served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Minister for Overseas Development and Secretary of State for the Environment. Between 1990 and 1992 Chris Patten acted as Chairman of the Conservative party and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

During the 1990s, following a distinguished career in domestic politics, Chris Patten became an international statesman. As the last British Governor of Hong Kong between 1992 and 1997, Chris Patten oversaw the transfer of sovereignty from the UK back to China at the end of the 99 year lease. This was followed by his outstanding work on policing in Northern Ireland, as already noted.

Chris Patten's contribution to the development of the European Union began in 1999 when he was appointed a member of the European Commission with

responsibility for External Relations, a major portfolio as the Union sought to enhance its role and presence in the world. He developed a close working relationship with Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Throughout his time at the Commission, Chris Patten travelled widely representing the EU at the highest levels in international politics. This was a crucial time for the EU as it embarked on the largest expansion in its history.

I have no doubt that these diverse experiences at the front line of British, European and international politics prepared Chris Patten well for the much more challenging cut-and-thrust of academic politics! He served as Chancellor of the University of Newcastle from 1999-2009 and has been Chancellor of the University of Oxford since 2003.

Chris Patten's deep interest in international politics and the challenges facing the contemporary world, led him to write three books in the recent past, the aptly titled *Not Quite the Diplomat: Home Truths About World Affairs* (2005) and *What Next? Surviving the 21st Century* (2008). His 1998 volume *East and West*, in seeking to explain Asia and its relations with the rest of the world, drew attention to one of the most fundamental shifts in global politics. Chris Patten has an abiding commitment to international law and institutions saying in 2001 following 9/11 'we've actually got to make international cooperation work and work more effectively and we have to make the institutions of global governance work and work more effectively' (28/11/2001).

In an extraordinary career spanning British politics, international politics, EU politics and British-Irish relations, Chris Patten has actively engaged with the problems of our age and contributed greatly to addressing them. His contribution to Ireland and to British Irish relations will never be forgotten. No one could have predicted that in less than 15 years following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) would have the backing of all parties in Northern Ireland.

Statesmen like Chris Patten are needed in the unsettled and unsettling first decades of the 21st century.

The NUI is proud to honour Chris Patten, politician, international statesman and friend of Ireland. We acknowledge and thank him for his immense contribution to peace on our island and to the transformation of British-Irish relations.

*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.*