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The Iona Community submission to the Smith Commission

I am writing on behalf of the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian movement based in Scotland with members throughout the United Kingdom and beyond. As an organisation we have a long standing commitment to working and campaigning for justice, peace and the renewal of society. We are encouraged by the extraordinary level of political engagement of the people of Scotland during the referendum campaign and welcome this opportunity to contribute to the ongoing debate.

We urge the party leaders, through the Smith Commission, within the timetable originally indicated, to fulfil their vow, given before the referendum, to deliver extensive new powers to the Scottish Parliament. However, devolution is a process and the work of the Smith Commission is not the end of this debate. We hope there will be opportunities for meaningful public involvement in discussion about devolution within Scotland strengthening local democracy and with increased representation of women and others underrepresented in political and civic structures.

We consider that the movement for political change and desire for a more equal society, evident among those who voted 'no' as well as those who voted 'yes', points clearly to the need to strengthen democracy through the creation of a more open, participative and consensual political culture and processes, and to give the Scottish Parliament a significant and substantial package of additional powers.

To this end we urge that full powers should be given in the following areas –
fiscal policy, employment, social security and tax benefits

We believe such powers would enable the Scottish Government to develop policies to challenge poverty and inequality, create job opportunities and increase employability, and promote progressive employment and work practices to secure gender equality and justice.

At present, the **Equalities and Human Rights Commission** in Scotland is responsible for all reserved human rights matters (Equality Act 2006) but is not accountable to the Scottish Parliament. Scotland needs the powers to introduce special measures and quotas at all levels in representative structures, and in public and corporate governance, in order to address gender inequality.

We believe there is a strong case for full responsibility in other areas where some devolved powers already exist –
energy, transport, economic development, immigration and international development

We believe that consideration should be given to the possibility of a degree of devolution in relation to **immigration**, and in particular to the proposal that refugees and asylum-seekers should be able to work before the determination of their case. Our experience in running an international volunteer programme leads us to support greater cooperation on the implementation of **tiers 4 and 5 of the Immigration System** covering post study work visas for students and short term visas for young people.

The Iona Community is an ecumenical Christian movement seeking new ways of living the gospel in today's world through working for peace and social justice rebuilding community and in the renewal of worship.

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The Iona Community has been engaged with **international development** since its earliest years. Many of our members have worked in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia; first during the post-war years of decolonisation, when some of them were deeply involved in indigenous struggles against racist states and later in the fields of health, education and the provision of essential services such as water and sanitation. Members have continued to be involved to the present day in issues of debt cancellation, trade and tax justice and the impact of climate change on the world's poorest countries, both abroad and in academia, church relationships, civil society campaigns and development education in Scotland.

The Scottish Government has had its own **International Development Policy** since 2005, introduced by the Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition on the basis of its work being complementary to the work of DFID. This approach has wide cross-party support. The **International Development Fund** and **Climate Justice Fund** have supported a wide and beneficial range of initiatives in a number of countries with which Scotland has important links, allowing for innovative approaches in health, education and governance, areas in which Scotland has traditionally had considerable expertise.

The **Scotland/Malawi partnership** is an innovative civic initiative which is dialogical, respectful and a departure from the traditional donor/beneficiary model. These programmes have encouraged a deeper awareness and support of international development issues in Scotland, and a much greater sense of ownership.

We believe, therefore, the Commission should consider **international development and foreign affairs** as separate powers, recognising that international development should be dictated by the needs of the world's poorest people, and that the Scottish Parliament and Government's authority to pursue an **international development programme**, and commit a budget to it, should be formalised.

Finally, while recognising that **defence issues** are unlikely to be covered in whatever proposals emerge from the Commission's work, the Iona Community will continue to campaign strenuously against the renewal or replacement of the **Trident** nuclear weapons system, to which such a strong body of public opinion remains consistently opposed.



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Leader
On behalf of the Iona Community