



**Remarks by Presidential Candidate Seán Gallagher in the Shelbourne Hotel,  
Dublin on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the Campaign Launch**

Good Morning everyone. I'm delighted to welcome you all here as I, with my wife Trish, family and friends, launch my campaign to become President of Ireland. This morning, I want to continue what I have been doing in communities nationwide over the last number of weeks - that is outlining my vision for the future of Ireland as President.

The role of President, while enshrined in our constitution, is one which has evolved over time. Ultimately, the President is the protector of the Constitution, but beyond that, the role is about leadership. It is about setting an example, a tone, a values system for the country we are and the country we want to become.

As President, I am committed to following the example of past Presidents who have shaped the arc of Ireland's history. Mary Robinson awoke Ireland's social conscience and began a conversation on what it means for a country to be truly inclusive.

Mary McAleese, with her husband Martin, set out to build bridges and promote peace and tolerance within and between communities. She also helped unionists and nationalists understand their differences and celebrate common interests to further the progress of peace on our island.

In their respective tenures, both Presidents fulfilled their constitutional roles. But they also led with imagination to address the challenges of those times.

As country today, we stand on the foundation of a proud past which gives us an ability to reimagine our future. In that context, in launching my campaign today, I am committed to putting my full self and the best of my abilities forward to make our communities and our country a better place.

I am committed to being a champion for an inclusive society, where we respect ourselves and each other, where everyone has a responsibility to play their part. Most importantly, I am committed to helping create a society where every person has the right to reach their full potential regardless of age, gender, creed or ability.

In seeking the office of President, I want to be able to look back in 7 years' time and be able to say that:

- We have changed the public's perception towards those with a disability to one where they see not just a person's disability, but their ability.
- We will have empowered all those with a disability to have confidence in their right to reach their full potential based on their unique abilities.
- Ireland will have become a role model to other countries on how to create an inclusive society and one that celebrates difference.

If we can achieve this, my journey will have been worthwhile.

In this changing world, Ireland has always been a country and a people that can make an impact. We have contributed to the world through our creativity, our problem solving, and the skills of our young people. I have seen this in my time as a youth worker, mentoring young people, in business, and in my work with communities across the island.

When the President takes the oath of office, he or she commits to using his or her abilities to serve the People of Ireland. That's exactly what I want to do as President. I want to use my skills, experience and energy to motivate people, create opportunities and serve the people of Ireland. Because for me, that is what the role of President is about— service.

I want to serve the people of Ireland at home as a President with honour and distinction, working with individuals, community groups, and those working to make our society more inclusive.

I want to serve our country with pride and dignity abroad, working to strengthen our international relationships and serve as calming voice in uncertain times.

I also want to be a President who, as head of state, celebrates the achievements of our people. Because when people feel acknowledged and recognised- they are more motivated to continue working towards making our country a better place. Most of all, I want to be a President that is measured not on his words or promises but his actions.

Over the course of this campaign I have outlined time specific special initiatives that I will launch in the first year of my Presidency. To date these have focused on promoting the role of women in politics, climate change, the Irish language, and honouring our Defence Forces. In line with this commitment, next Monday, I will announce the details of 20 Special Initiatives which, if honoured to be elected, I will commence within the first 20 weeks of my Presidency.

These initiatives are centered on the 5 core values that have shaped my life and will guide my campaign and Presidency- Respect, Responsibility, Community, Trust and Inclusivity.

The first of these values is Respect. Respect for ourselves and for each other. This is the true measure of our character, as people and as a country.

With this in mind, I want to create an Ireland where we nurture the vulnerable in society and focus on the strengths of all citizens. I have always been passionate about self-determination- the idea that every person should feel respected and valued to the extent they can live their full life to the best of their ability.

That is why as President, I am committed to helping shape a society that respects all our citizens equally. The second value which has shaped my life from an early age is responsibility, the idea of leading by example, knowing right from wrong and believing that it is not our shortcomings that define us, but what we do in spite of them.

As guardian of the constitution and head of state, I want to lead by example. This starts with acknowledging that we all have a sense of duty to step forward and leave our country better than we found it. In this regard, my campaign has led by example by being carbon neutral and committing to having a carbon Neutral Office of the President by 2021.

I also want to encourage others to step forward to become leaders in their communities. Many people will see me as a businessman, but the diversity of my background extends to many other areas. I started in my career in agriculture and farming before my involvement in Foroige and Macra ignited in me a passion to address community needs as a professional youth worker.

Working with the national youth council of Ireland and collaborating with professionals and teachers around the country, we trained more than 5000 youth leaders to work with young people to prevent alcohol abuse and promote self-esteem.

Today, Trish and I have two beautiful children - Bobby and Lucy. As a Parent, I feel responsible to ensure that they and every person in our country feels valued and encouraged to better our society. Every single one of us has something to contribute and something to offer.

But most of all, we have a responsibility to discover where our strengths lie and use these to better ourselves and others. This the ethos I wish to foster as President. Growing up in a small village, I have seen firsthand the power of community. I want use my Presidency to empower others to to step out, and serve their communities.

I started my campaign in Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan where I grew up and this is a reminder to me of what can be achieved when we give people the courage to become leaders in their own communities.

We must also realise that we are an island of communities.

I have repeatedly said that I believe we will see a United Ireland within my lifetime. I remember my first meeting with John Hume in 1985 and he spoke of 'difference as an accident of birth'.

This is why as President I intend to build on the work of Mary McAleese to work with Government and community groups to continue building bridges.

Partition has never served us well in the past nor will it in the future.

I like, many others, grew up with the reality of military checkpoints at the border amid a backdrop of conflict and challenge.

In building on the progress we have made under the Good Friday Agreement, we must never return to the all too familiar site of the barrel of a rifle at the intersection of two lands.

We must continue to unite communities north and south because only when we unite communities can we consider uniting territories.

Trust is a value that has guided me throughout my life but more importantly, it is the foundation upon which democracy is built. I have always been committed to not just

doing things right but doing the right things. In this regard, I have endeavoured to lead by example by making a voluntary disclosure to SIPO.

While it is not legally required, I believe that doing so is in the interests of transparency and befitting the office of President. If elected Head of State, I will acknowledge my responsibility to lead by example in setting benchmarks for transparency and the appropriate use of public funds.

This is why as President, I am committed to ensuring that the expenditure of the President is open to the public and subject to proper scrutiny.

In this regard, if honoured to be elected, I would urge the government to carry out an annual audit of all expenditure associated with the office of President.

This is not about politics but about doing the right thing because after all, the office of the President belongs to the people of Ireland.

Lastly, I believe we are strongest as a country when everyone feels included in our quest to make Ireland a better place. After all, we are a nation that knows too well what it feels like to be different in a foreign land. That's the story that has shaped our past and allowed us to contribute to so many countries and communities across the globe.

As President, I want us to be cognisant of this past so that we welcome all identities in our society.

We have so often championed the rights of others abroad- the right to asylum, the right to food and shelter. Here at home however, we must continue to champion these rights for our own people and those who we have welcomed from foreign shores. If elected President, I hope to work with all relevant organisations to create a more inclusive, tolerant Ireland that celebrates the diversity of the nation we have become.

In concluding, I want to reflect on the campaign so far. There is often an urge for many to engage in a politics or commentary of negativity, but this is not what the people deserve in choosing their next President. Cynicism does not create change. That is why my campaign will be a positive campaign focused on reimagining the future of our country.

From growing up in Cavan to launching my campaign for President today, my journey has been grounded in the values I have known all my life- Respect, Responsibility, Community, Trust and Inclusivity.

In looking to the future and the next 7 years, I want to lead a country that does not focus on the I or the me, but the us and the we. On our responsibility to leave our country better than we found it. I will nurture a society that celebrates the strengths of our country and praises the achievements of all citizens. I will foster a spirit of self-determination among our people- listening to and working with every individual to help create a future we can all be proud of.

I will work with our communities, fostering trust and inclusivity so that people feel empowered to step forward and play their part, based on their own unique talents and abilities.

We are only strongest when everyone has this spirit and I look forward to continuing my conversation with you, and the people of Ireland as we look to shape our future, together.

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