

Sharing the lessons of building a peace

BY REBECCA BLACK

A NEW resource aimed at allowing peacemakers from across the world to learn lessons from Northern Ireland's experiences was launched on World Peace Day yesterday.

Danny Kennedy, chairman of the committee for the OFMDFM, and Professor Terry Duffy, executive director of the Irish United Nations Association joined community leaders from Belfast to launch a new website dedicated to sharing best practice in peace and reconciliation work around the world.

Speaking at the launch Mr Kennedy said: "We have much to share with peacebuilders worldwide. Northern Ireland has come a long way from the dark days of 40 years ago when it was known world wide for the horror of the Troubles.

"The transformation here has not been achieved easily and we have not achieved it on our own.

"We have benefited from the advice, assistance and perseverance of many internationally renowned peace-builders.

"But this has been matched by vitally important work by individu-



PEACEBUILDING: Jackie Redpath MBE, chairman of Springboard, Angela Chada executive director with Danny Kennedy, MLA, and Sarah Maitland, project co-ordinator, at the launch of the World Peace Day website

Picture: **Bernie Brown**

als, communities, organisations and numerous others in Northern Ireland who, despite the many setbacks, continued to believe in and work for a peaceful society.

"However, while we may want to shout from the rooftops about the

successes and progress which have been made from the worst days of the Troubles, we must remember that for many in Northern Ireland, particularly those who are victims or survivors, those living in poverty and those from our ethnic commu-

nities, there is still much work to be done."

Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie also lent her support to the event. She said: "It is also important that we learn from others who have overcome deep divisions and conflict as we face the challenges which lie ahead and seek to move to a **truly** inclusive and peaceful society."

The International Day of Peace was first established in 1981 by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to coincide with its **opening session** every September.

In 2001 the resolution was strengthened to fix the date annually on 21 September and for it to be a day of non-violence and ceasefire.

The www.globalpeacebuilders.org website has been developed by Belfast-based **Springboard Opportunities** and will create an international network of conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, by connecting organisations, individual practitioners, researchers and other groups worldwide.