

Robin
(early)

Draft agreement on decommissioning impasse

1. The signatories to the Belfast agreement, done on Good Friday 1998 (hereinafter 'the parties'), recognise the widespread desire in the community, domestically and internationally, for an urgent end to the impasse over arms decommissioning and the formation of the Executive Committee, as envisaged in the agreement.
2. The parties believe that the resolution of this impasse lies in the application of universal democratic norms. They do so in cognisance of the democratic impetus behind the agreement, as indicated by the overwhelming support expressed in the referenda of May 22 1998, and the need for any resolution not to be perceived in partisan terms as victory or defeat. Spelt out
3. The parties agree that democracy is the substitution of the force of argument for the argument of force and so requires that a level playing-field be created between all democratic political actors. The parties look forward to the early formation of an Executive Committee in which governance is conducted as a dialogue between equals, without hint of domination, and in which violence, from any quarter, or its threat, has no role to play.
4. The parties also agree that in democratic societies the state exercises the monopoly of legitimate force, and that it may only apply such force as is absolutely necessary consistent with international human-rights norms. They therefore reaffirm their endorsement of the provisions in the Belfast agreement reviewing policing and criminal justice in Northern Ireland and addressing decommissioning.
5. Without prejudice to the independence of these commissions, the parties endorse a policing service which is routinely unarmed as well as the disarmament of paramilitary organisations. While not wishing to establish any moral equivalence between policing and paramilitary structures which have existed heretofore, they recognise that these goals are mutually reinforcing. Diminution of the paramilitary threat will facilitate unarmed policing and unarmed policing will facilitate acceptance that the emergent police service can indeed exercise a legitimate monopoly of force.
6. The parties are confident that such a genuinely peaceful scenario can be fully achieved within the timescale outlined in the agreement if, in the interim, all the institutions of democratic governance envisaged in the agreement are also established. These include the Executive Committee, the North South Ministerial Council and the British Irish Council.
7. The parties believe that both devolution and decommissioning should progress, *pari passu*, as rapidly as possible, and certainly such as to achieve full implementation of the agreement by May 2000. Each party is committed fully to

assuming its own responsibilities in this regard, as well as assisting other parties to fulfil theirs.

8. The parties recognise that restraining progress on either decommissioning or devolution, treating one as a bargaining chip against the other, can only perpetuate a stalemate in which neither is achieved and which the parties are determined to end. Rather, these objectives should also be seen as mutually reinforcing elements of the vision of peace and democracy to which the people of Ireland have so overwhelmingly given their consent.
9. Should, however, the past deadlock continue despite this accord, the parties accept that as of May 22 2000 parties may decide, individually and severally, to pursue new arrangements which they believe may command substantial cross-community assent, so that progress can with certainty be made without partisan veto. They welcome the knowledge that they would enjoy the support of the British and Irish governments in any such endeavour.

RW, 12/8/99