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STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 7 ON THE IMPASSE IN THE PEACE PROCESS

The Group of 7 has viewed with increasing dismay the difficulties which continue to beset the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Like the majority of people in Northern Ireland, we wish to see the institutions envisaged in the Agreement up and running. Only they can provide the leadership to tackle the mass of urgent social and economic issues which are central to the future welfare of the entire community.

We share the desire for decommissioning and for an immediate end to the savage acts of lawlessness which are now an everyday occurrence. There is no justification for these, whether or not they are carried out with the connivance or support of elements within the communities in which they occur.

In the interests of its trade, its investment and its tourism, Northern Ireland always has to hold its own in a highly competitive global environment and it is presently also having to cope with the economic uncertainty facing the UK as a whole. To succeed, we need the vigorous dynamic and the self-confidence generated by a society which is able to achieve reconciliation and build a common purpose and is no longer dominated by the old animosities and the politics of confrontation. Northern Ireland has enormous potential, which is simply waiting to be unleashed.

It may be that the Group's worries are misplaced and that a way out of the apparent impasse, of which we are unaware, is in preparation. If not, we face, at best, continued drift. Those throughout the community who voted for the Agreement expected it to make a difference. They looked forward to living in a society free from traditional strife and tension, where the priority issues would be how best to boost investment, create jobs, reduce unemployment, eliminate poverty and improve standard of living and quality of life. Nobody expected miracles but we all hoped for evidence of a fresh start.

The Group of 7 is convinced that it is not too late to recapture the hopes generated by the success of the political parties, against all the odds, in reaching agreement ten months ago on a framework for the future. ✕

Anyone who comments on the situation has a responsibility to attempt a constructive suggestion. The Group of 7 has no political axe to grind. We pride ourselves on our independence. We are interested, as all involved in business (whether as management or unions) must be, in what has to be done in any situation to achieve a workable solution. In this instance we believe that, for a way forward to emerge, two things have to happen:

- (a) The establishment of the Executive as soon as the necessary legislative arrangements are in place, involving all those participants who affirm the terms of the Pledge of Office. That is what the letter of the Agreement, which the parties signed up to and the electorate endorsed, would seem to require.
- (b) Simultaneously, the commencement of decommissioning by paramilitary organisations, republican and loyalist. That is what political reality requires and the creation of a normal, decent society demands.

We would therefore urge all concerned to pull back from the collision course on which they are currently set. We would invite them, instead, to look outward towards the community and to respond to this plea by a Group which, throughout, has steadfastly supported the search for peace and now asks that, on all sides, the further steps required to consolidate it be boldly taken.

For everybody to wait for somebody else to move before moving themselves is a sure recipe for permanent immobility. Northern Ireland has no future of any quality except as a stable, inclusive, fair, prosperous and outward-looking society.

GROUP OF SEVEN

George Quigley

George Quigley (Chairman)

Chris Gibson

Chris Gibson, Chairman,
Confederation of British Industry

~~Y. S. Smyth~~

Nigel Smyth, Director
Confederation of British Industry

Gwyn Jones

Gwyn Jones
Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses

Ann F. Shaw

Ann Shaw, Chairman
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Eamonn Oakes

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Frank Hewitt

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Director, NI Growth Challenge

Neville Morrison

Neville Morrison
NI Hospitality Federation

Felix Mooney

Felix Mooney
NI Hospitality Federation

The NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a member of the Group of 7, whilst not a signatory to the Statement, is fully in support of its emphasis on the need to find urgent means of resolving the current impasse in the Peace Process.

Ethnic frontiers by definition "are places apart + places between"

Recognise / legalise conflicting identities.

The right to self-determination when asserted racially takes account of minorities in the country.

Equal treatment as a citizen vs full commitment to the state? Which comes first.
Imperial claim became a 'connectedness' claim. Language of separatedness of Unionist/Republicans

Total defense vs Total abandonment

Strategic alliances to "limit the manoeuvre of the other"

Metropolis vs Ethnic boundaries. Represent both identities + embrace neither.

Upfront political investment by governments.

Agreement → ^{Individuals allowed to move} Beyond the confines of being 'contained'

(churches - created a 'myriad of small slights')