

5 May 2000

See p 3

STATEMENT BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS

1. In recent weeks, the two Governments have taken stock of progress in implementing the Good Friday Agreement.
2. Much progress has already been made, but there has been disagreement over how and when implementation of remaining aspects of the Agreement should be achieved.
3. The Governments now believe that the remaining steps necessary to secure full implementation of the Agreement can be achieved by June 2001, and commit themselves to that goal. They have drawn up, and are communicating to the parties, an account of these steps.
4. Subject to a positive response to this statement, the British Government will bring forward the necessary order to enable the Assembly and Executive to be restored by 22 May 2000.
5. With confidence that there are clear proposals for implementing all other aspects of the Agreement, the Governments believe that paramilitary organisations must now, for their part, urgently state clearly that they will put their arms completely and verifiably beyond use. Such statements would constitute a clear reduction in the threat. In response, the British Government would, subject to its assessment of the level of threat at the time, on which it will continue to consult regularly with the Irish Government, take further substantial normalisation measures by June 2001.

- 2 -

6. The IICD will continue its task under the Agreement. The Governments will now ask the IICD to consider urgently, in consultation with representatives of the paramilitary organisations, whether there are any further proposals for decommissioning schemes which offer the Commission greater scope to proceed in more effective and satisfactory ways with the discharge of its basic mandate, and to report. The Governments will give early consideration to any such proposals. The Commission will make further reports as necessary. Those reports will be published promptly by the two Governments.

7. Progress to full implementation of all aspects of the Agreement will be periodically assessed by the two Governments, in consultation with the Northern Ireland parties.

8. If difficulties arise in the implementation of the Agreement (for example, the IICD reports that it does not believe that arms will be put beyond use, or the institutions are not operating in good faith as envisaged in the Agreement), the two Governments will, in consultation with the Assembly and the Executive, carry out an immediate formal review under the terms of the Agreement.

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1

OFFICE OF AN TAOISEACH
GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS
DUBLIN 2

5 May 2000

This sets out the Governments' proposals necessary to secure full implementation of the Agreement by June 2001, in addition to those already set out in our statement.

Rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity

As has already been announced, incorporation of the EHCR into British and Irish domestic law will take effect from October 2000. The British Government has already invited the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to advise on the scope for defining rights supplementary to the Convention.

Under the legislation which came into effect in January, all designated public authorities in Northern Ireland will begin to have equality schemes in place from 1 July 2000.

The Irish Commission on Human Rights will be established by the Irish Government in July 2000, so that the Joint Committee of both Human Rights Commissions required under the Agreement will therefore be established by the end of July 2000.

Both Governments will continue to take measures and develop programmes to support the victims of violence and their families.

The British Government will ratify the Council of Europe Charter on Regional or Minority Languages by September 2000 and publish within six months an action plan for

- 2 -

implementing the charter. Technical discussions on the steps required further to extend TG4 reception in Northern Ireland will continue. Other measures will also be taken including a two year Irish language TV and film production pilot scheme which will start by April 2001.

Security

The British Government will progressively take all the necessary steps to secure as early a return as possible to normal security arrangements in Northern Ireland, consistent with the level of threat. It will report regularly on the steps taken and will consult with the Irish Government, and the political parties as appropriate, on measures necessary to respond to any continuing paramilitary activity.

In particular, both Governments will continue to oppose with resolute and determined action any group that uses or threatens violence to disrupt the peace process, taking whatever measures within the law are justified by the threat.

Policing and justice

Legislation to implement the Patten report will, subject to Parliament, be enacted by November 2000. The new Policing Board will be appointed in January 2001 and will assume its responsibilities in April 2001. A new independent police recruitment agency will be established, and the first process for recruits to join the Police Service of Northern Ireland will start in April 2001.

The British Government has already announced a six month consultation process on the Criminal Justice Review to end in September, so the Government will announce its decisions on implementation in October 2000. Legislation, and a detailed timetable for implementation, will be published by April 2001.

- 3 -

Prisoners

It is intended that, in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement, all remaining prisoners qualifying for early release will be released by 28 July 2000. Measures will continue to be taken to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community, and to address related issues.

We are writing in similar terms to the leaders of other Parties represented in the Assembly, and of the UDP.

TONY BLAIR**BERTIE AHERN**