

**PRESS RELEASE**

**NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION**

14<sup>th</sup> July 2001

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition is convinced that the Good Friday Agreement still holds the best hope for resolving the issues of arms conversion, policing and the establishment of a shared society. We believe that the talks over the past week have been some of the most difficult to date, but there has also been a level of honesty about what is possible – as distinct from desirable – at this stage in the process.

We have always believed that the issue of arms can only be effectively dealt with in the context of the overall implementation of the Agreement. If we put this within the broader context of arms conversion and deal with it alongside issues of demilitarisation; the longterm disarmament of the police; the use of plastic baton rounds and the eventual review of legally held weapons, then we feel we will make progress towards a normal society. We note the comments made by Gerry Adams earlier this week in committing Sinn Fein to the removal of physical force republicanism. This we feel is an important benchmark in the process of moving towards eventual arms conversion.

The Coalition has consistently argued that the process that we have been engaged in to date has been more about crisis management than conflict transformation. We have put proposals to the two Governments as to how this process can now be redesigned to deal with the outstanding substantive issues in a more collective and conciliatory fashion. It is time to move away from summits towards a process that creates a shared analysis of what this Peace Process means to all of us.

Finally it is our analysis that we must move beyond the politics of winners and losers and artificial deadlines so that we can address the issues in such a way that inspires confidence and creates space for movement by parties as a whole.

**ENDS**

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