



The White House Conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland

Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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SUPPORTING PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The United States attaches great importance to the search for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, both in the context of our world-wide commitment to end terrorism and our desire to promote democratic solutions to conflicts. Our close bonds of history, culture and tradition with Ireland and the United Kingdom provide us with a unique role in helping to achieve these goals.

We have encountered and supported the courageous efforts of Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds and British Prime Minister John Major to establish a new framework for peace and justice in Northern Ireland. For the first time in a generation, both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries have declared cease-fires. Each day that passes without terrorism strengthens the hope that the bomb and the bullet are gone for good from the politics of Ireland.

The President has pledged to do all he can to support the building of peace in Northern Ireland. The United States wants to do its part to ensure that peace brings to Ireland new opportunities for job growth and economic prosperity, which in turn will help ensure that this newfound peace is a stable and lasting one.

The promise of peace will allow Americans to build on the strong business, trade, political and cultural links we already enjoy with Ireland, north and south. The United States is the most important source of internationally mobile investment in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. Forty U.S. companies are already operating in Northern Ireland, providing some 9,000 jobs. In addition, the Administration strongly supports the International Fund for Ireland, which funds a broad range of economic and social development projects.

This present opportunity for lasting peace in Ireland is the chance of a generation; it must be seized and supported. The President therefore has directed his Administration to undertake the following initiatives in the coming months to increase our support for the political and economic revitalization of Northern Ireland and the border counties:

White House Conference for Trade and Investment

The President will host a White House Conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland. The Conference is planned for April 1995 in Philadelphia. He has instructed the Department of State to name a coordinator to work with Secretary Brown and his staff, the International Fund for Ireland, the Irish and British governments and private sector and political groups to organize and support the conference. The President looks forward to participating in this Conference, which will aim to show U.S. companies that sustained peace is dramatically improving business opportunities on the island of Ireland and, particularly, in Northern Ireland and the border counties. American businesses should be in on the ground floor of these new opportunities; this will be good for us and good for Irish peace and reconciliation.

Commerce Secretary Brown to attend Belfast Investment Conference

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown will travel to Belfast in December 1994 to lead the U.S. delegation to Prime Minister Major's Investment Conference for Northern Ireland, where the opportunities for increased business links between Northern Ireland and the U.S. Secretary Brown will also travel to Dublin for consultations. In both cities, he will prepare the groundwork for the White House Conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland. The President has also asked Secretary Brown to present the new initiatives he identifies at the White House Conference in April.

Increased Funding for the IFI

The President is committed to continued strong U.S. support for the International Fund for Ireland. In addition to our planned obligation of almost \$20 million to the Fund in Fiscal Year 1995, we will seek Congressional concurrence to increase IFI funding by an additional \$10 million in Fiscal Year 1996 and in Fiscal Year 1997, for a total of about \$30 million each year. This increase will bring the total commitment of the Administration to the Fund to roughly \$100 million. The IFI has steadily strengthened and adjusted its programs and management over the years. We expect such progress to continue. This additional funding will support the IFI in undertaking the vital new initiatives that are needed to consolidate the gains of peace in Northern Ireland and the border counties and to build cross-community economic and political cooperation. We will work with it to strengthen its programs even further and particularly to address such entrenched problems as the high rates of long-term unemployment in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

Department of Commerce programs

The President has directed the Department of Commerce to enhance our cooperation with Northern Ireland in science and technology, especially through strengthened collaboration with our Manufacturing Extension Partnerships and other programs to encourage technological innovation. The Commerce Department will also establish a Business Information Center for Trade and Investment and review other ways to promote business opportunities in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

The Department of Commerce will also initiate a business intern training program to bring managers and business technical experts to train with U.S. companies. This program will expedite the learning of advanced management and production skills and begin operating in Fiscal Year 1996 with approximately \$1 million in bilateral assistance funds. It will help improve the productive abilities of industry in Northern Ireland and the border counties and will also generate increased business between U.S. firms and companies in Northern Ireland -- creating more jobs both there and here.

USIA programs

The President has instructed the United States Information Agency to expand its programs in Northern Ireland in view of the changing political climate, increasing exchanges of persons as well as planning speakers and seminars on such topics as conflict resolution. In addition, USIA will open its grant competitions in such areas as conflict resolution to allow American non-profit organizations to submit proposals for projects in Northern Ireland to support the momentum for peace and reconciliation.

National Endowment for Democracy

The President will encourage the National Endowment for Democracy, which is presently funding a political party training program in Northern Ireland, to seek additional opportunities to strengthen and expand its programs there.

U.S. Agency for International Development

The President has asked USAID to explore ways to work with the IFI to increase the impact of its business enterprise program on small and micro-enterprises. Thomas A. Dine, USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and the New Independent States, will travel through Northern Ireland and the border counties beginning November 19 to review existing IFI programs and determine whether approaches used by USAID elsewhere may have application in Northern Ireland.

Trade and Development Agency

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency will lead a technical delegation to Northern Ireland to identify infrastructure and industrial projects that represent mutually beneficial trade and investment opportunities. Depending on the findings of the delegation, further activities might include the funding of feasibility studies and/or the sponsorship of reverse trade missions.

A Continuing Commitment

We will continue to look for opportunities to support the efforts of the British and Irish governments and of democratic leaders in Northern Ireland to build on peace. We encourage the millions of Americans who want to contribute to peace in Ireland to do the same.

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