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Roinn an Taoisigh  
Department of the Taoiseach

**FAX MESSAGE**

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Message: Copy of speech delivered by the Taoiseach yesterday (30 April) at the Fingal  
15 TU Centre for the Unemployed

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ON BEHALF OF	THAR CEANN
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*Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr. John Bruton, T.D.,  
in accepting over 4,000 signatures for peace in Ireland  
at the Fingal ICTU Centre for the Unemployed*

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was very happy to accept the invitation from the Fingal ICTU Centre for the Unemployed to accept the signatures of over 4,000 people in the Finglas area who have signed on for peace. I commend the way in which the Centre responded to what I understand was a constant stream of requests from the ordinary men and women with whom it is in contact for some kind of campaign to demonstrate their support for peace throughout Ireland and their demand for a restoration of the IRA ceasefire.

In this respect, people here in Finglas form part of a huge wave of concern and determination across the nation, as we saw in the massive public demonstrations for peace, following the ending of the ceasefire. This evening, I want to address myself to the Republican movement to put to them why the ceasefire must be restored. I also want to underline the opportunity that now exists in the all - party negotiations, to tackle in a fundamental and constructive way the causes of conflict in Ireland, and to bring about substantial and significant change. And I want to set out some of the key elements in the Irish Government's approach to the talks and to appeal for a constructive and creative spirit on all sides as they enter the negotiations, now less than 6 weeks away.

Let me underline that there is no problem or issue to which the Government accords a higher priority than that of resolving the conflict centred in and around Northern Ireland. With my Cabinet colleagues, I am responsible for the good government of the State here, for effectively tackling such problems as unemployment. But, I and my colleagues also recognise our responsibilities towards the Irish nation that extends beyond this State, both towards Northern nationalists who would seek to secure their identity within an Irish State and unionists who prefer to express their Irishness within a British framework.

Let us recognise that the Northern conflict is one of long standing with roots which run deep in the history of this island.

At the core of the problem is the division which exists between people of two distinct traditions in Northern Ireland. This division owes its origins to the wider, centuries-old British Irish relationship.

The fact that this wider relationship has matured and developed out of all recognition over the years, particularly in more recent years, provides grounds for confidence that the last remnants of the older divisions - which in fact define the Northern problem - can and will be removed. And, the fact that the seeds of the present difficulties lie, as I say, in older and wider divisions which have long since been bridged between the United Kingdom and the Irish State, clearly points to the paramount need now for the two Governments, working together, to take the lead in assisting and guiding the parties who remain divided to a new and honourable way of sharing their lives on this island. Without clear and firm guidance and commitment at Government level there is no real prospect of resolving the problem.

Nobody who has taken the time to think about the Northern question ever thought it was going to be easy to reach an honourable accommodation acceptable to both sides.

Along the way there have been major steps in the right direction. There have also been set backs.

The cessation of violence in August and September 1994 represented a critically important step forward: the ending of the IRA cessation on 9th February this year a real setback. But the Government, despite this setback, remained and remains resolute in its determination to produce a lasting settlement - and remains assured in its conviction that a settlement is literally within reach.

That settlement can only be brought about through inclusive all-party negotiations.

There is no need, at this stage, to outline the origins and history of the decommissioning debate.

What is important is that the Government was determined that a precondition of prior decommissioning of arms would not be allowed to stand in the way of progress towards full and meaningful negotiations. Because Northern Ireland was, and remains its number one priority, the Government managed to reach some crucially important agreements with the British Government, specifically,

- the launching of the twin-track process and
- the establishment of the International Body under the Chairmanship of George Mitchell.

The International Body went on to produce a wise, and extremely well-balanced Report which actually provided us with the way out of the decommissioning impasse.

But then, on 9th February of this year, the Government found itself confronted with its greatest challenge to date in terms of sustaining and advancing the Peace Process.

The ending of the IRA ceasefire on that date, marked by senseless and profoundly immoral killings, created a deep and widespread sense of shock and disbelief not only here but internationally.

But still the Government remained determined to press forward with the peace strategy. Immediately following the renewed outbreak of violence we set about the extremely difficult task of getting the process back on track.

Following an intensive round of contacts with the British Government

- The Government produced a fixed date for the commencement of all-party talks, thereby plugging the "gap" which I've mentioned earlier and meeting a long-standing demand of many parties, including Sinn Fein. The talks will now begin on 10th June. There is no doubt on this score.

- More recently the Government also, agreed with the British Government, the "Ground rules for Substantive All-Party Negotiations".

Let me emphasise the ways in which the Ground Rules paper addresses concerns on the negotiations proceeding to a real and successful outcome.

First, like the 28 February communiqué before it, it makes clear that the negotiations are to address in, a full and comprehensive fashion, all the relevant issues and relationships and to do so within a three-stranded process, where Strand Two will cover relationships within the island of Ireland. This communiqué is entirely consistent with the all party approach in the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The final paper of the Drafting Committee of the Forum recognising the need for new political arrangements to enjoy widespread support from within both traditions, declared that there can be no exclusively internal Northern Ireland settlement. That is the position of the Government and is the democratic consensus of all the parties that participated in the Forum. And now the arrangements for the negotiations will also ensure that there cannot be any narrow focus on an internal settlement in the talks.

Second, the Ground Rules paper states explicitly that the comprehensive agenda for the negotiations, to be adopted at the opening session, will include all the significant items which the various negotiating teams consider relevant. It makes absolutely clear:

- \* that each participant in each of the three strands will be free to raise any aspect of the relevant relationship including constitutional issues and other matters which it considers relevant;
- \* that no outcome is either predetermined or excluded in advance;
- and
- \* that participation in the negotiations is without prejudice to any participant's commitment to the achievement of its own preferred options - by exclusively peaceful and democratic means, of course.

I believe that in securing such detailed and open provisions the Government have given very clear evidence of our good faith when we say that we want to see all parties involved in the negotiations. These provisions mean that whatever serious issues participants want to put on the agenda - whether it is the D.U.P., Sinn Féin, the Alliance Party or anybody else - will be on the table for discussion.

Third - Paragraph 5 of the Ground Rules paper uses the words " so as to ensure that all issues will be addressed in a coherent and efficient manner" in referring to the structure of the negotiations. Unlike in 1991/92, negotiations in all three strands can and will open on the same day and go forward in parallel and we have ensured that other features which led to blockages and delays in 1991/92 will not operate on this occasion. The Ground Rules paper also says that both Governments are determined that the structure and process of the negotiations will be used in the most constructive manner possible: and commits both Governments to use their influence in the appropriate strands to ensure that all agenda items are fully addressed and that any obstacles that may arise are overcome. In addition, the principle that nothing will be finally agreed in any strand until everything is agreed in the negotiations as a whole ensures that there can be no overlooking or steamrolling of the concerns of any significant grouping.

Fourth - The Ground Rules paper says, plainly, that "the conduct of the negotiations will be exclusively a matter for those involved in the negotiations". Any reference from the latter to the forum or any interaction of any kind with it, may, under the rules, take place only if the negotiating teams agree and formally instigate such interaction. Under the rules, there is no requirement for the negotiators to report to the forum or to verify or validate any contingent agreements with the forum. The negotiators are left completely independent and in charge of the process. This is underlined by the fact that the first meeting of the forum will follow, not precede, the opening session of the negotiations.

Concern was also expressed that the forum could constitute the embryo of a re-established Stormont or set a course on the road back to Stormont. If these concerns were that a purely internal administration involving the domination of one side by the other, and characterised by an exclusive concentration of power and by discrimination would be agreed, there never was, and never can be any question of an agreement being reached that would incorporate such an outcome. No nationalist party would stand for it. And certainly no Irish Government could or would. Moreover, to give credit where it is due, all the Unionist parties have made clear - I believe sincerely - their acceptance that there can be no return to an old-style Stormont regime. And to my knowledge, it forms no part of the British Government's intentions.

In any case, under the British legislation now enacted, it is clear that the forum in Northern Ireland is strictly time-limited and will not, in particular, continue beyond the duration of the negotiations.

Apart from the forum, the holding of an election in Northern Ireland, as a prelude to talks, has been controversial. Substantial arguments were advanced against it, including the risk of closed rather than open manifestos and the risk of polarisation of opinion during the campaign. However this mechanism is now being used as an entry to all party negotiations, and I believe that the Nationalist parties are to be saluted for their decision to take part in this entry mechanism for the negotiations, given their strong reservation about what was, after all, a unionist proposal.

We want to ensure that irrevocable momentum will be built up and sustained in the negotiations, so that they can develop a positive internal dynamic of their own towards agreement and lasting peace, as happened in South Africa. In that context, it may be desirable to seek agreement on an indicative time frame which, without seeking unduly to pressurise any participant, so as to help ensure that momentum and dynamic. The British legislation allows a period of a year, with the option of a second year. This may be prudent, given the extent of the differences between the parties but I believe that we should aim for something a good deal more concentrated than that. It is interesting, in that connection, that a paper from the Ulster Unionist Party in February, 1995, called for a properly pre-planned, intense and time-limited phase of talks.

The Government are fully committed to the Mitchell Principles and to the negotiations leading to the gun and the bomb being taken out of the equation. These issues will have to be satisfactorily addressed at the commencement of the negotiations and dealt with to the satisfaction of all the participants in the process of negotiations. But the Government are concerned to ensure that an exclusive focus on this issue does not prevent parallel progress on other issues and block progress towards the overriding goal of a widely accepted political agreement that will bring to an end the era of politically motivated violence. Yesterday, the Tánaiste proposed an approach which we believe could help to meet both these imperatives. The Government will pursue vigorously with all those involved the vital need to ensure the necessary clarity in this area in order to ensure that the negotiations develop momentum from the very outset.

Let me come to the Irish Government's approach to these negotiations. The Ground Rules paper notes that the Irish and British Governments have, in the Joint Framework Document, set out how they see the parameters of a possible

outcome of the negotiations. And, certainly, as we go into the talks, the Irish Government will be basing our position on the Framework Document, and also on the "Realities, Principles and Requirements" document very largely agreed by the parties participating in the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The Government will be aiming to secure, at the end of the negotiations, an agreement that will have the same international status as the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, and which will secure the continuing beneficent interest and support of the European Union, the United States and other friends of the Irish and British.

Agreement on an overall settlement will require a balanced accommodation of the differing views of the two main traditions, which takes full account of the conflict of identities and allegiances. Accordingly, there is no question of the Government I lead conforming to or acquiescing in any unionist agenda of domination. It is true that I have often stressed, and I reiterate now, that it is absolutely essential that we show openness to unionist views and to their legitimate concerns. That was very much the position in the Forum document I mentioned but it also, of course, strongly emphasised the legitimate concerns of nationalists. Thus, taking our cue from these basic documents, the aim and approach of the Government will be to ensure that all concerns and interests of nationalists are fully addressed and met, within an equitable and balanced accommodation between the two major traditions with which both can live. The same holds true for unionists. There must be no question of domination of nationalists by unionists or vice versa. Rather the new arrangements and structures must afford to each tradition, on the basis of equal treatment, secure and satisfactory expression and protection in all spheres of public life.

Thus, the Government's approach will be that there must be substantial and significant change, on the lines and in accordance with the principles set out in the Framework Document, in regard to constitutional and political matters. Here it is worth recalling that, in the Framework Document, the British Government gave a commitment that, in the context of an agreement, they will enshrine in British constitutional legislation the new approach to the exercise of their jurisdiction there, either by amendment of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, or by its replacement by appropriate new legislation and appropriate new provisions entrenched by agreement. The Framework Document also sets out the proposal, adopted by both Governments, for a North-South body and framework that, in addition to serving practical economic purposes, would also provide a vehicle for acknowledging the respective identities and requirements of the two major traditions and express and enlarge the mutual acceptance of the validity of those traditions. Here, I am happy to acknowledge the



recognition some months ago, for the first time, in an Ulster Unionist Party paper, that these were necessary and legitimate purposes of North-South arrangements.

Other participants in the negotiations of whatever tradition, will, of course, be free to put forward their own views, whether on the principles or on political arrangements and structures. It will be difficult to find a basis for agreement but it has, I believe, been accepted on all sides that this is what we have to do - work at it until we do find such a basis.

But in addition to the questions of political structures, the Government believe that the talks will have to seriously deal with the whole agenda of direct concern to people at the grassroots, for example in the area of parity of esteem and equality of treatment. This, of course, is an area in which successive Irish Governments have constantly put forward proposals and representations to the British Government over the last decade or more and where we continue to do so, day to day and week by week.

Worthwhile advances have been made in such areas as strengthening fair employment legislation and results are to be seen in narrowing imbalances in employment. But it remains essential that in the forthcoming negotiations, the opportunity is taken to review afresh and tackle such matters as the continuing serious imbalance in the unemployment experience of the two traditions in the North and, indeed, the wider question of equality in regard to economic development. The achievement of greater and more equally shared prosperity, and the empowerment and inclusion of deprived and marginalised communities and groups, are not only vital in themselves but also have the capacity to create a more stable social environment in which new political arrangements are more likely to take root and command confidence. In the Government's view, these goals should be pursued, both inside and outside the negotiations.

Ensuring parity of esteem in regard to the Irish language, Irish culture and Irish identity generally, with British identity, cultural traditions and manifestations, is another area the talks must cover. Policing and the administration of justice are two other critical areas. In both, a durable settlement requires that the structures, symbolism and practices can command the unequivocal support, participation and confidence of all sections of the community and it is accordingly essential that these areas be seriously addressed in the negotiations.

The protection of human rights is another area calling for attention in the context of an agreed political settlement. The Forum for Peace and

Reconciliation has done a lot of useful work on how human rights might best be protected and promoted in circumstances of peace and political stability, including on what should happen to the panoply of emergency legislation in such circumstances. This could be drawn on as we seek to find the best solutions in this vital area.

In the context of the negotiations moving positively towards agreement, it will also be essential that they focus in an imaginative and constructive way on all the questions relating to those who have been imprisoned in the context of the conflict. It would, of course, be essential that, in parallel, the necessary sensitive attention be given to the concerns of the victims of violence, from whatever source. Indeed, the talks would have to cover the full gamut of issues that would arise - for the paramilitaries, for the security forces, for the victims, and for the Governments - as one moved from a situation in which peace replaced paramilitary violence.

These are some of the major headlines for the issues that the Government believe must be dealt with, as part of a comprehensive negotiation that omits no significant issue affecting the conflict.

Justice is a vital foundation for peace and the outcome of the negotiations must ensure that it will be done and be seen to be done. The Irish Government will certainly work actively towards this objective. Where, on individual issues, or on blocks of issues under discussion, there is parallelism between the positions we take and those of other participants, we will be prepared to work side by side for the achievement of common purposes, subject to adhering to the basic principles of consent, non-violence and democracy most recently reaffirmed in the document of the Forum's Drafting Committee.

I have talked about the structures and processes for the negotiations and about some of the elements in the substance of the talks. But equally important is the spirit in which the participants approach the negotiations. On all sides - the political parties, the Irish Government, the British Government - there must be a readiness positively to engage. The two Governments are central, and both have to play a full partnership role. We in the Irish Government certainly approach the talks in that spirit. We will spare no effort to ensure that the approach of all the participants, and, of course, of the British Government is fully up to the challenge that faces us all. I recognise that, on the part of Sinn Féin, there has been a marked distrust of the British Government which is no doubt reciprocal. We all have to work hard to build trust, but I believe that the

negotiation of, and the follow up to, the communiqué of 28 February has shown that serious business can and will be done with this British Government.

As a result of that follow up, the basis is now in place for meaningful negotiations to commence on 10th June. We want no empty chairs there that day - we want all the nationalist parties and all the unionist parties. We want them all there with the will to make the negotiations a success, with a constructive spirit, a spirit of reconciliation, of generosity, of readiness to compromise. We have seen some signals of such an approach on the part of unionists but we have also seen contrary signals. I know that they, too, have concerns about how far they can trust nationalists, republicans, the Irish Government. I acknowledge that we in the Government in Dublin and all on the nationalist side have much work to do to gain that trust.

But I would hope that unionists can see the unrivalled opportunity that is now there from a historic compromise between the two great traditions in Ireland. I hope also that they can acknowledge, and take encouragement from, the fact that nationalist positions now accord full recognition and respect to their British allegiance and identity and to the need for consent and agreement. Finally, I hope that, confident in the strength of their community and their position, they can resolve to engage seriously with legitimate nationalist concerns and rights. For our part, the Government stand ready fully to engage with the concerns that unionists have. We aim, on an even-handed basis, at a new political dispensation that is fair to all, that threatens nobody and that fairly accommodates the identities and rights of all.

Republicans, too, face a challenge. In his speech to his party's Ard Fheis just over a month ago, Gerry Adams said that real negotiations are the only mechanism for change. We are now, as I have demonstrated, facing into real negotiations. We want all the relevant parties there. The Sinn Féin President referred to the need for Republicans to engage in the mechanism for change. That mechanism is now there. The Irish Government will be using the mechanism to bring about substantial and significant change. The Republican movement has the opportunity, as it undoubtedly has the capacity, in its political leadership, to pursue its agenda in these negotiations by peaceful democratic means. They should now seize this historic opportunity.