

POSITIVE BULL POINTS

The Joint Declaration represents:

- "Mission Statement": a sound platform for the Talks Process and a realistic call for peace. It shows the British and Irish Governments working together: for democracy and against violence;
- Both Governments have made a solemn commitment to promote co-operation at all levels on the basis of the fundamental principles to which they have jointly committed themselves - including Northern Ireland's statutory constitutional guarantee (paragraph 2) - which the JD has accordingly reaffirmed;
- the British Government has reaffirmed that they will uphold the democratic wish of "a greater number" of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland. (On this basis, the Prime Minister has reiterated that the British Government has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland);
- the British Government agreed that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland if that is their wish. In other words, there can be no united Ireland without the democratic consent of the people of Northern Ireland (paragraph 4);

both Governments also reaffirm that they will introduce the necessary legislation to bring about a united Ireland - or equally to any measure of agreement on future relationships in Ireland which the people living in Ireland may freely determine... (paragraph 2). This reaffirms, therefore, the freedom of constitutional choice within Northern Ireland;

- the Taoiseach has accepted that the democratic right of self-determination of the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland (paragraph 5). This is a further guarantee that there will be no coercion of the people of Northern Ireland into a united Ireland;
- the Taoiseach has confirmed that, in the event of an overall settlement, the Irish Government will put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland;
- the British and Irish Governments have reaffirmed their commitment to seeking, along with the NI constitutional parties through a process of political dialogue, to create institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, will enable them to work together in all areas of common interest (paragraph 9). This again reinforces the Talks process;

- the British and Irish Governments have reiterated that, following a cessation of violence, democratically mandated parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they will abide permanently by the democratic process are free to participate fully in democratic politics and to join in dialogue in due course between the Governments and the political parties on the way ahead (paragraph 10). The offer to the men of violence is clearly on the table. It is up to them to respond, and stop the killing now;

- Summary: the Joint Declaration provides a framework for peace, stability and reconciliation. It underwrites the democratic principles and guarantees of all parts of the community within Northern Ireland. It removes every possible pretext for violence and terrorism.