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DRAFT SPEECH BY SECRETARY OF STATE

## THE JOINT DECLARATION: THE BASIS FOR PEACE AND POLITICAL PROGRESS

1. The Joint Declaration was signed by the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister on the 15 December last. And the ensuing 8 weeks has, unquestionably, seen the most intense period of political activity and debate in Northern Ireland in recent years. Certainly the level of public and media interest has been extraordinary.
2. I for one am glad that this has been so. Because the Joint Declaration addresses issues of the most fundamental importance for people living on the island of Ireland. That is why it is so immensely gratifying that the Joint Declaration has been accepted and in many cases warmly endorsed by political parties which represent the vast majority of people here. In a very real sense, the people of the two parts of the island of Ireland have, through their democratically elected representatives, signalled their agreement on how they should 'exercise their right of self-determination, on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South'. They have determined to embrace the Joint Declaration, and to reject violence as a political weapon.
3. Now why are the elected representatives of the people of Ireland, North and South, giving their overwhelming support to the Declaration? I believe that they are doing so because they recognise it as a balanced and fair statement of constitutional principles and political realities. And they see that it acknowledges and

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safeguards the vital interests of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland on the basis of parity of esteem.

4. The question arises therefore: since the will of the people of Ireland, North and South, is so abundantly clear, why does Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA continue to treat it with such contempt by failing to renounce violence? John Hume doesn't know. On 4 January, he issued a statement in which he analysed the relationship between the Joint Declaration and "the stated reasons for armed struggle given by the IRA". He concluded that, in the light of the Declaration, "past reasons given by the Republican movement for armed struggle no longer exist."
5. Perhaps the most striking and novel feature of the Declaration, particularly when viewed from an Irish nationalist standpoint, is its explicit treatment of the question of self-determination. I have already quoted from part of the relevant passage, but let me remind you that paragraph 4 also says that "The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone ... to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent ...".
6. This means what it says - essentially that, since it has no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland, the British Government will neither apply external influence on, nor seek to impede, the exercise of self-determination.
7. The Joint Declaration, of course, stands on its own merits - and those merits have attracted a huge international consensus. But I, like many others, found it extremely helpful that the Taoiseach, in his 20 January speech,

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examined its self-determination provisions in a broader context. He referred to a number of cases throughout the world which illustrated his thesis that "the right to self-determination has to be applied sensitively, as a means of solving rather exacerbating conflict, and with full regard to the wishes of the people." And he concluded that "the right to self-determination of the people of Ireland, North and South concurrently, now recognised by the British Government for the first time in the Joint Declaration, is fully in conformity with present international law and practice." In reaching this conclusion, the Taoiseach did not resile from the nationalist position that the partition of Ireland was wrong. But he went on to say that holding the view that partition was wrong in 1920/21 would not justify enforcing Irish unity in the 1990s. I hope that all those who share the Irish nationalist ideal will have weighed his words carefully.

8. But the Declaration makes it clear that it is not only a statement of principles and realities agreed between the Irish and British Governments; it is also designed to be "the starting point of a peace process designed to culminate in a political settlement." This naturally begs questions about how such a peace process would be conducted and what kind of political settlement might emerge from it.
9. The Declaration itself provides the absolute prerequisite for a genuine peace process. In it, both Governments reaffirm that the achievement of peace must involve a permanent end to the use of, or support for paramilitary violence.
10. The Declaration goes on to make it clear that, if that condition is truly met, then full participation in an

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inclusive political process will follow. I need not detail again today the intermediate steps toward fully inclusive political dialogue; I spelt these out in my 20 January speech to the Trinity College Dining Club. Nor do I need to enlarge on the fact that a permanent cessation of violence would obviate the need for deploying the Army in support of the police and for the emergency legislation which I know bears heavily on many parts of the community. Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA understand what is an offer and what is required. The ball is, and will remain, in their court.

11. The Declaration also spells out how the principles of self-determination and consent will apply to the constitutional issue. In specific and unambiguous terms it makes it clear that, if the people of the island of Ireland, North and South, by agreement wish to bring about a united Ireland, there is a binding obligation on the British Government to introduce the legislation necessary to give effect to that wish. The British Government would be the facilitator of the will of the people; and it would be bound to act in accordance with the will of the people at whatever point in time that agreement and consent was achieved - whether it be in 50 years, or 20 years, or 5 years. But the Irish Government is committed to the principle that consent is an absolute requirement of the nationalist ideal; and both Governments are committed to upholding that principle. The Declaration makes it plain that whether and when there is to be a united Ireland is a matter for the people living on the island of Ireland, North and South and for them alone.
12. It is not for a British Minister to predict future attitudes in Northern Ireland. But I recall that Edward Carson, speaking in November 1920 about the Government of

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- Ireland Bill, said "I hope with all my heart that in the long run it will lead to unity and peace in Ireland" and hoped that, again in the long run, he and Joe Devlin would see "Ireland one and undivided". Of course, Carson's framework was the United Kingdom and the British Empire, but the empathy with his fellow Irishmen was nonetheless clear. Carson would have regretted, as do I, that the divisions have deepened since 1921.
13. Since the Declaration affirms that the constitutional issue is for the people, North and South, to decide, it follows logically that the British Government should not seek to influence the outcome of the exercise of their right to self-determination. Indeed it is inconsistent for those who believe in Irish self-determination to argue that the British Government should adopt such a determinative role; and it is in some ways paradoxical that republicans should argue that it should exercise such a powerful influence over people in Northern Ireland. The Taoiseach has said that coercion has no place in the future of Ireland and the British Government will not seek to coerce the people of Northern Ireland - either directly or, more insidiously, by becoming a persuader for one outcome or another.
14. But, of course, the democratic political process will continue. And I am confident that the people of Northern Ireland, and of the rest of Ireland, are capable of reaching agreement on how they wish to manage their relationships. That is one of the central preoccupations of the Talks process. The Declaration makes clear that the primary interest of the British Government is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among all the people who inhabit the island; and

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that we will encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of agreement. So we have taken on the role of persuader for agreement, rather than for any particular outcome, since to do otherwise would be inconsistent with the principle of self-determination which is also central to the Declaration.

15. It is, of course, primarily for the Northern Ireland parties, in conjunction with the Irish Government as appropriate, to determine the outcome of Strands 1 and 2 of the Talks process, and the broader directions in which agreement there might develop in the longer term. But the British Government does have the advantage of knowing a good deal about where all the various Talks participants stand on the key issues. And it might be helpful, at this critical moment in history, to give some broad indication of what might emerge in a balanced political agreement.
16. Much attention has quite naturally focussed on the prospect of a new regional Assembly for Northern Ireland, and rightly so. Such an Assembly would exercise the powers transferred from British, usually but not always English, Ministers to Northern Irish politicians elected by Northern Irish people. Provided such an Assembly commands widespread support, it would, in my view, be a welcome development.
17. But an Assembly would also constitute the necessary basis for Northern Ireland's participation in any new institutions designed to accommodate and develop the relationship between the two parts of the island. Such institutions could address matters of mutual benefit and matters of concern to one side or another. And they could, in the words of the Joint Declaration, promote co-operation at all levels and enable the people of

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Ireland to work together in all areas of common interest. In time, as trust and confidence grew, such North/South institutions could help transform the relationship between nationalists and unionists and, if it was so agreed, take on an increasingly dynamic role on the island.

18. For its part, the British Government's position on the North/South dimension is that it will facilitate the development of any arrangements or structures which can be agreed between the main Northern Ireland parties and the Irish Government, subject only to them being consistent with the United Kingdom's international obligations.
19. Of course as well as a regional Assembly and meaningful North/South arrangements, it is to be expected that a balanced political accommodation would also involve a revision of the arrangements for dealing with British-Irish Government relations and, as the Declaration states, proposals for change in the Irish constitution to fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland. Again, the Taoiseach's recent speech explained how such constitutional development would be consistent with the principle of self-determination.
20. Other features of a political accommodation might be some form of entrenchment of human rights to provide additional safeguards against discrimination and disadvantage; an agreement to ensure that the nationalist and unionist identities be given parity of esteem in genuinely practical terms, with neither dominating the other; and whatever changes to the machinery and operation of government are required to ensure that all the institutions and agencies of government attract consent and allegiance from all parts of the Northern Ireland

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community. This is to say nothing of the economic and social opportunities which a lasting peace would bring, especially to those people and communities which have suffered the greatest hardship and deprivation during the history of the Troubles.

21. This is all to play for within the framework laid down by my predecessor on 26 March 1991. It is my fervent wish that these vital issues can be addressed, in the most inclusive form consistent with essential principle, at the earliest opportunity. The British Government will play its part in encouraging and implementing any agreements which emerge.
22. I have tried to put some flesh on what is available, to the people who inhabit the island of Ireland, in the Joint Declaration and in the processes which can flow from it. Naturally, like the vast majority of those people, I hope for an early cessation of violence, from both republican and loyalist sources. But translating such a cessation into a lasting peace will require agreement among the people of Ireland, North and South. That is the essential thing.
23. The Joint Declaration provides the basis from which that agreement can be developed; it provides the platform for a peace process which is available to all who eschew violence. The people understand that, and they expect, indeed demand, that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA should now accept the logic of their own position and make the historic transition from the violent coercion of their fellow countrymen to the path of democratic persuasion. The lives of Irish men and women depend on them having the courage and the humanity to do so.