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A STRATEGY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN IRELAND

A Joint Declaration by the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.

The British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach acknowledge that the most urgent and important challenge facing the people of Ireland, North and South, and the British and Irish Governments together, is finally to overcome the legacy of history and to heal past conflicts and differences, recognizing that past failures to settle relationships between the people of both islands satisfactorily has led to continuing tragedy and suffering.

They believe the development of closer European unity, which will result in the effective removal of borders, fundamentally changes the nature of British-Irish relationships and removes the basis of the historic conflict still taking place within the confines of Northern Ireland. These developments, and the fact that both parts of Ireland will in the future be the only considerable territory in the Community without land links to the other countries and regions, will intensify the need for both parts of Ireland to be united in their approach to all major issues, which affect the future of all the people of Ireland, North and South, in the context of the new Europe.

Both the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach are convinced that the ending of conflict and healing of division can make a huge positive contribution to the future welfare and prosperity of both parts of Ireland, as well as bring to an end the last remaining divisions in a European Community that has already ended more deep and bitter quarrels. Both of them recognise that the ending of division can only come about with the agreement and co-operation of the people North and South. They therefore make a solemn commitment to use all their influence and resources to create an atmosphere which will foster agreement and reconciliation, and to promote

intensive co-operation at all levels to strengthen the process of agreement and achieve closer unity of purpose.

Lesson of Irish history is that without consent no law works

4 The British Prime Minister reiterates on behalf of the British Government that they have no selfish, strategic, political or economic interest in Northern Ireland, and that their sole interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among the people who inhabit the island. The British Government acknowledge it is the wish of the people of Britain to see the people of Ireland live together in unity and harmony, born of agreement with respect for their diverse traditions, and with full recognition of the special links and the unique relationship which exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

5 The Taoiseach, on behalf of the Irish Government, accepts that the exercise of the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole cannot in practice be achieved except with the agreement and the consent of the people of Northern Ireland and that it must consistent with justice and equity respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights of both communities, whether majority or minority. The Irish Government would, accordingly, commit themselves to working, in the spirit and on the basis of the Report of the New Ireland Forum, to create institutions and structures, which while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland would enable them to work together in all the areas where there is substantial common grounds. This would help to build the trust necessary for an agreed future leading to a closer form of unity by agreement. Such unity would of course, require institutional recognition of the special links that exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland as part of the totality of relationships, while taking account of the newly forged links with the rest of Europe.

6 In order to promote these aims the Taoiseach has indicated to the British Prime Minister his intention of establishing a permanent Irish Convention in order to consult and advise on the steps required to remove the barriers of distrust which

