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Statement by Minister Simon Coveney to mark the 24th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement

Statement

10 April 2022

Today marks the 24th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. As the world watches continuing horrors unfold in Ukraine, this anniversary reminds us of how far we have come, how profoundly precious peace is and of the power of democracy.

With the election now underway, we will see that power exercised in the weeks ahead, as the people of Northern Ireland elect those who will represent and serve them in the coming years.

The vision of the Good Friday Agreement is based on hope, on inclusion, on power sharing, and on peace and reconciliation across these islands. The Agreement was a defining moment in our shared history. Its defining legacy has been to commit everyone to exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences and pursuing political aspirations. In the subsequent 24 years, the island of Ireland has been transformed. While there are ongoing challenges, there is now increased trust between communities, greater mutual respect, and ongoing practical work to make people’s lives better. Every day, dedicated people from communities across the island of Ireland come together to continue the work of peace and reconciliation. It is important to remember that an overwhelming majority of people on this island voted in favour of the Good Friday Agreement. This was a clear vote for peace.

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At times over those 24 years, dark shadows of the past have returned. As we approach Easter, we also approach anniversary of the killing of journalist Lyra McKee, a vibrant young woman, passionate about both her home place and her work. Lyra was of the ceasefire generation. It is for this generation, and those who follow, that we must ensure no return to those dark days. The Good Friday Agreement remains the guiding light for a brighter future.

I am acutely conscious that there are communities that feel that they have not benefited from the Peace Process. I want to reaffirm the Irish Government’s commitment to work in partnership with politicians and all communities in Northern Ireland, and with the British Government to address these concerns. We have challenges ahead and solving these challenges can be frustrating. However, as the Agreement has shown us, it is only through collective, democratic action that we can find a way forward.

ENDS

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