

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2015/89/99
Creation Date(s):	[15 November 1985]
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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Statement by Mr. Peter Barry T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs
on his designation by the Taoiseach as Permanent Irish
Ministerial Representative in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental
Conference

I view it as a great honour that the Taoiseach has designated me to be Permanent Irish Ministerial Representative in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference established by today's Agreement. It is now my task, together with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to see through on the ground the detailed implementation of the pledges contained in this Agreement. In accepting this role and aware of the great responsibilities it carries, it will be my purpose to ensure that the hopes that are placed in this initiative do not go unfulfilled.

Since becoming Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have spoken frankly about the problems of Northern Ireland and of the special difficulties that have always arisen for the nationalist people there. Northern nationalists should know that I will use every opportunity open to me and all my authority as Irish Permanent Representative to secure the redress of your complaints, the recognition of your rights and respect for your aspirations within a new context of equality and reconciliation. Your concerns are the concerns of the Irish Government. As the Taoiseach said to you today: Lift up your heads knowing that your position now is, and is seen to be, on an equal footing with that of members of the unionist tradition in the North. Now we have the possibility for the first time to light up the shadow that these troubles and all that has gone before have cast over your homes and over your streets. Let us work together to make sure the lamp of peace stays lit.

To the unionists of Northern Ireland, I say that you have no cause to fear this Agreement. This Agreement brings you, no less than your nationalist neighbour, the reassurance of your

rights, respect for your identity and the promise of a society free from insecurity and violence in which you can realise the full measure of your worth and dignity as a people. I want to cooperate with you to remove barriers of suspicion and rivalry which have divided neighbour from neighbour in the North in the past so that we can turn the tide and bring peace and prosperity to the people of this island.

All of us, Governments, politicians and people, will be harshly judged by the generations which follow if, through an unyielding attachment to old positions, we fail to show the capacity for pragmatism and generosity necessary for this new stage of cooperation. I urge both communities in Northern Ireland to play their part in building together a new future. We all have a great deal to learn from each other. For my own part, I will do everything I can to help them to seize this vital opportunity for peace.