



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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POLITICAL MATTERS

Speaking Notes

Political response to IRA cessation

BRITISH GOVERNMENT POSITION

- I hope that the British Government will shortly feel able to conclude that the ceasefire is indeed permanent and to make that judgment known.
- We understand fully your need for prudence and for reassurance to the Unionist community.
- We feel, however, that it is better to take your cue prudently from developments on the ground rather than become enmeshed in semantic issues.
- The Prime Minister has said some helpful things in public which indicate that the gap is narrowing in terms of your requirements. I hope that it can be eliminated altogether as soon as possible.
- Last Friday's developments were very welcome and we made that clear at the time - even if we would ideally have liked a little more advance notice. The steps taken by

The Prime Minister and yourself should help to ease tensions and build trust in both communities.

- They also eased a serious worry that we had, that you would be unable to make any move to consolidate progress until you had fully satisfied yourselves on the permanence issue.
- In the last analysis, the permanence of the ceasefire will be confirmed by the attitudes in the community at large and positions such as that taken by the Prime Minister and yourself will help greatly in that respect.
- It is essential that the two Governments should work together at this delicate juncture on ways of promoting the confidence of both communities in Northern Ireland.
- The peace process must be consolidated and developed with all possible speed. All involved in it have taken risks, including the Republican leadership - in their own terms possibly more than anyone else.
- It is incumbent on the two Governments, as the sponsors of the process, to show sensitivity in all directions.
- The Taoiseach and I have from the outset underlined our sensitivity to Unionist concerns and our readiness to assuage them in any way open to us.
- In turn, we hope you will do what you can to acknowledge the profound nature of the shift made by the Republican movement and to build on its potential.
- I am naturally particularly concerned that the threat posed by Loyalist violence should be removed and that the

Two Governments should speak and act in a way which removes all possible pretext for a continuation of the Loyalist campaign.

- In that respect, any long-drawn-out doubts about the authenticity of the ceasefire could inhibit Loyalist consideration of a ceasefire on their side and even jeopardize our hopes in that respect.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE CEASEFIRE

- The international welcome for the ceasefire has been extremely gratifying.
- It is an important asset for both Governments and should help us to develop the potential which now exists for lasting political and economic progress.
- My own contacts with President Clinton and with our European Union partners have indicated that increased financial assistance to facilitate economic reconstruction in Northern Ireland and in border areas could perhaps be secured through determined joint efforts by both of us.
- (We will be discussing this in greater detail under a separate agenda item).

FORUM

- The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation will play a key

role in the political consolidation of the peace process.

- The Taoiseach and I have been engaged in an initial round of consultations with the parties on the objectives and arrangements which we envisage for the Forum.
- We have since received further detailed views in writing from a number of the potential participants.
- We have formally invited the three Unionist parties (including Jim Kilfedder's Popular Unionists). While we have as yet had no response, we are quietly resigned to a refusal. However, it may be that the Unionists will agree to some oblique form of association with the Forum (e.g., through the submission of written contributions).
- We expect a fairly broad and balanced agenda of concerns to be raised at the Forum. The parties will, after all, encompass a very wide range of political interests in Ireland.
- With or without formal Unionist participation, it is clear that measures to promote reconciliation between the two traditions will be a major concern.
- One of the Forum's primary purposes will, of course, be to provide an immediate political outlet for Sinn Fein. However, I expect that the final outcome will represent a balanced synthesis of the concerns and objectives of both traditions in Ireland.
- We have made very clear that the Forum is not a substitute for negotiations, although of course some of its work might be helpful in negotiations eventually.

Review of progress on joint framework document

- Our officials have met on several occasions over the past few weeks to pursue the work on the framework document.
- A number of areas require further attention:
 - We need to work further on constitutional issues;
 - The question of a default mechanism/guarantees and , the EU dimension need to be addressed;
 - Detailed work is in progress at present on the North/South institutions.
- It is also likely that at least some of these matters will ultimately require resolution at political level.
- Nevertheless, I think it is reasonable for us to aim at completion of the document by, say, mid to end October.
- It is important that the momentum of the ceasefire is used to push forward towards negotiation.
- We can best achieve that by providing the parties at the earliest opportunity with a document containing our shared ideas on the shape of a future agreement.
- It is also important for us to recognize that, while some areas covered by the document will be open to negotiation with the parties, others will be the exclusive concern of the two Governments and should be settled between us. This must be made clear to the parties.

- Once the document has been agreed between us, I would like to see it going to the parties immediately.
- If our work goes well, that would hopefully be within a matter of weeks from now.
- That takes us to the question of whether the document should be published and, if so, at what point.
- I think that we should accept, as a matter of political realism, that it will enter the public domain - and probably in partial or distorted ways - as soon as even one party has it.
- While we might wish it otherwise, it is perhaps best that we take the initiative ourselves and publish it as soon as it has gone to the parties.
- Should we do this in the context of an October summit?
- We will also need to consider whether it would be prudent to have advance contact with the parties in order to optimise the chances of a positive reception when the document is formally transmitted to them.
- Another issue will be the preparation of joint positions for the responses we give in public to matters raised in the document.
- We will also need to consider what immediate follow-up there would be with the parties. One possibility would be to invite the party leaders to an early joint meeting with the two Governments in order to give their responses to the document. (Questions arising would include: should the leaders be seen collectively or separately? at what level would the Governments see them? etc)

- All of these matters will obviously require further consideration within both Governments.

- The deployment of this jointly negotiated document and our follow-up with the parties are matters of acute political sensitivity which call for maximum coordination and unity of purpose between the two Governments.

Prospects for political talks

- What is your judgment of the overall prospects, in the light of the recent contacts you have had with the parties?

- I gather that Michael Ancram saw the UUP earlier this week. What is your assessment of their mood? (We were a little disconcerted by the uncharacteristically hard-line tone which Reg Empey struck in his public comments afterwards).

- What is your assessment of DUP intentions in the wake of the Downing Street encounter?

Conclusion

- You and I have been working for the best part of two years to achieve a resumption of round-table talks.

- I believe that the momentum generated by the IRA ceasefire has created an invaluable opportunity for political dialogue which can lead to a comprehensive settlement of the problem.

- We must go for that comprehensive settlement (not

piecemeal approaches). We must seize the opportunity which we have and work for the "new beginning" in all our relationships to which we are both committed.

Developments since the IRA ceasefire:

Background Note

1. On 31 August, the Provisional IRA announced that, with effect from midnight, there would be a "complete cessation of military operations".
2. In a statement, the Irish Government warmly welcomed the IRA's decision to make "a definitive commitment" to the success of the democratic peace process. The Government looked forward to the full implementation of this decision on the ground as well as to reciprocal action by all other groups engaged in paramilitary activity. The Government said that the next step would be inclusive negotiations designed to produce a just and lasting political settlement between the people of Ireland of all traditions. They also looked forward to the economic benefits of peace and to material support from the US and EU for reconstruction in the North and in border regions.
3. The British Prime Minister stated that he was greatly encouraged by the announcement but needed to be clear that this was indeed intended to be a permanent renunciation of violence. The absence of the word "permanent" from the IRA statement has been a continuing theme of British Government comments on the ceasefire. The British Government has re-iterated that it is ready to enter into exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein within three months of a permanent cessation of violence. However, British Ministers have - for public consumption, at any rate - indicated a reluctance to "start the clock" in this respect until any doubts about the permanence of the IRA ceasefire have been removed.
4. The Taoiseach and the Tánaiste have sought in speeches and statements since 31 August to reassure the Unionist community that no deals have been done with the IRA and

●hat recent developments pose no threat to them.

5. On 31 August the Taoiseach said in the Dail that the Irish Government were prepared to recognize in practical ways without delay the electoral mandate of Sinn Fein, "on the basis that the complete cessation of IRA military operations will immediately become and remain a reality". He also said that he would shortly initiate discussions with all interested parties on the establishment of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation and that he hoped the Forum can be launched by the end of October.
6. Also on 31 August, the Tánaiste said in the Dáil, inter alia, that "for the first time the road is open to political dialogue between the two Governments and the political parties on an all-inclusive basis, under democratic ground rules equally applicable to all". The Tánaiste said work is proceeding intensively between the two Governments on the framework document. He added that a background of peace "opens the way for comprehensive negotiations on a level democratic playing field".
7. A round of initial consultations on the Forum has now taken place. The Taoiseach to date has met the leaders of the SDLP, the Alliance party and the Opposition parties in the Dáil. On 6 September he met the Sinn Fein leader (along with John Hume). In a statement issued after the meeting, the Taoiseach, Mr. Hume and Mr. Adams said that "we are at the beginning of a new era in which we are absolutely committed to democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems ... our objective is an equitable and lasting agreement that can command the allegiance of all".

Invitations to attend the Forum have been issued to the main Unionist parties. The DUP have indicated they will not attend.

8. In a statement in Belfast on 16 September, Prime Minister Major announced the lifting of the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein and stated that any future political agreement emerging from the three strand talks process will be put to the electorate in Northern Ireland for approval in a Referendum. Mr. Major said that the IRA "...are nearly there....I hope they will have the courage to remove ambiguities and make the clear statement everyone wishes to hear". Also on 16 September, Secretary of State Mayhew announced the reopening of 10 cross-border roads.

9. Responding in Australia, the Taoiseach described the British moves as "contributing to the consolidation of the peace process". The Tánaiste said they were "positive and constructive steps which will significantly assist the consolidation of the present promising situation". The Tánaiste said that the commitment that the outcome of negotiations will be submitted to referendum in Northern Ireland is in line with the position in the Government Programme that the final outcome of such negotiations would need to be acceptable to the people, North and South.

European Reaction

10. In a statement on 31 August, President Delors warmly welcomed the IRA announcement. He reaffirmed the Union's "support for the ongoing peace process and our continued willingness to provide every practical assistance we can to that process". President Delors said that "in the light of recent developments the Commission will consider, in consultation with the two member states most directly concerned, how best its continued support and assistance can be shown through additional financial and other measures".

11. At the Informal meeting of Foreign Ministers held in

Usedom 10-11 September, the Tánaiste and Secretary of State Hurd briefed their colleagues on political developments. Afterwards, Foreign Minister Kinkel said in media comments that concrete measures of assistance would be examined and that the Commission would discuss the best way forward with the two Governments.

12. In a statement to the European Parliament on 14 September, President Hansch warmly welcomed the cessation of IRA violence and stated, inter alia, that "we hope that the Commission and Council will respond rapidly to the requests from the British and Irish Governments for community aid to be stepped up in this vital period".
13. As a first step to demonstrate its support for recent developments, the Commission announced on 21 September a decision to increase by one third, from 15 MECU to 20 MECU, the Union's contribution to the International Fund for Ireland in each of the next three years. In a press statement, the Commission stated that it will examine with the two Governments "how to develop its policies further and refocus them in support of reconciliation with a view to proposing an appropriate package of measures in a second stage".

US response

14. In a statement on 31 August, President Clinton welcomed the "watershed announcement" by the IRA and said that "it can mark the beginning of a new era that holds the promise of peace for all the people of Northern Ireland". The President concluded that "the United States continues to stand ready to assist in advancing the process of peace in Northern Ireland".
15. The Tánaiste briefed President Clinton on political developments at a meeting in Martha's Vineyard on 2 September. In media comments afterwards, the Tánaiste

expressed the Irish Government's appreciation for President Clinton's assistance to both Governments. The Tánaiste said that he had discussed with the President ways in which the United States could be of assistance and that the President "has a genuine and serious commitment to assisting the Irish and British Governments and also assisting both communities in Northern Ireland...."

16. The Taoiseach had a meeting at Shannon Airport with Vice-President Gore on 7 September. In subsequent media comments, the Vice-President endorsed the Taoiseach's view of the permanence of the IRA ceasefire and pledged continuing US support for the peace process. The Vice-President said that Ireland was "top of the agenda" in US foreign policy.

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