



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
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EU Aid for Peace Trust P.1 (27)

*The President  
of the European Parliament*

*B. McCarthy  
for information  
14/9*

**The President of the European Parliament, Dr. Klaus HÄNSCH, opened the Session on Wednesday, 14th September 1994, with a declaration about Northern Ireland.**

The President said:

My fellow Parliamentarians,

The President of Parliament does not usually open a plenary session with a statement. If I have been asked to do so today by all the Group Leaders it is because of exceptional events in our European Union, in one of its regions, in Northern Ireland.

On behalf, I believe, of the vast majority of members of this House, I warmly welcome the most recent developments in Northern Ireland, particularly the IRA cessation of violence, which have, in our view created an historic opportunity for peace, and for an end to violence in the region.

Of course, events this week have shown that not all violence has ceased in this conflict. We hope that all organisations there will now renounce violence for good. Political dialogue is the only way forward.

After a long dark storm, it is natural that the first steps into the sunlight are wary ones. But an historic opportunity should be seized. I commend the efforts for peace of the Irish and British governments. Statesmanship requires prudence, but also seizing of opportunities.

Peace is being constructed in the Middle East precisely because statesmen with courage grasped opportunities when they presented themselves.

You will expect me to salute just such a statesman of courage in our own midst, today; John Hume. His unceasing efforts for peace have received their first reward. We are naturally proud of this achievement of a member of our own House.

As he has said so often we in this Parliament pass comment very frequently on conflict and war outside the Union. In Northern Ireland we have a region of the Union at conflict within itself, for now twenty-five years.

Our Union is built on the basis of values; values of peace and democracy and respect for diversity. Terrorist violence, violence from any source, is contrary to these values.

Our Parliament has consistently expressed its solidarity with the people of Northern Ireland, in word and in deed. The very important investments flowing to the region, and the Union's participation in the International Fund could, in this new political climate, transform the Region's prosperity by the turn of the century. 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.

The Group Leaders and I hope that you will agree to debate the economic and political situation in Northern Ireland at the earliest opportunity - already next session - so that we can examine practical ways of increasing that assistance in the new context.

But, today, let us just pay homage to the people of Northern Ireland as they see these glimpses of a brighter future. Their steadfastness and courage through a quarter of a century of violence and terror inspires the whole of Europe with optimism for the future.

We cannot forget the suffering, and the thousands of our fellow European citizens who have lost their lives in this region, and indeed in both Ireland and Britain. Their deaths must not be in vain. I invite you to join with me in a minute of silence to show our respect for their memory, our solidarity with their families and neighbours, and our most heartfelt wishes and support for a brighter tomorrow.

**EMBARGO: 4 p.m. (ME7)**

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