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**NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service**

7 March 1995

**Attached is a copy of a speech made by the Secretary of State,
Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP, to a meeting in Washington today hosted
by US Secretary of State, Mr Warren Christopher.**

Press statement by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland: 7
March 1995

Mr Secretary, it is a delight to be in Washington again, and to meet with you once more. I greatly look forward to our discussions. Thank you for your generous words. They are deeply appreciated. Thank you too for America's staunch support for our work to secure peace on proper principles of democracy, utterly rejecting violence.

Thank you once more for America's generosity to the International Fund for Ireland - put to such good and closely focused use in Northern Ireland.

As you have rightly said, the Joint Framework Document is offered by the Irish and British governments to the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland as an aid to further talks and negotiations. We have the overall objective of a comprehensive settlement based on agreement.

But agreement in a democracy can only come when democratically mandated parties sit down and talk together on equal terms.

That is what we are working for - with the outcome put to a referendum in Northern Ireland.

In a democracy, parties will not sit down, must not sit down, with another party that implies that if it doesn't get its way, it is prepared to condone a return to violence.

Sinn Fein undoubtedly does have a democratic mandate in Northern Ireland, though a lot less than Mr Munn's nationalist party, the SDLP.

But it is inextricably linked with the Irish Republican Army and that Army :

- is still in being;
- still maintains its arsenal;
- still recruiting;
- still targeting;
- still training;
- still researching improvised weapons;

Not least, it is still seeking funds to maintain its operations, and still carrying out, on a greater scale than before the cease-fire, brutal punishment beatings in the community.

Why? - if peace is already permanent? The next essential step, as you have already said, must be to begin the process of decommissioning arms, both IRA and Loyalist. We are absolutely clear that substantial progress on this must be made before Sinn Fein can be admitted to substantive talks for an overall settlement. And without that progress, the reality is that certain other parties would not sit down with them.

We are however currently holding exploratory dialogue both with them and the Loyalist parties associated with paramilitaries, so that each other's positions can be tested out and better understood.

Sinn Fein want us to raise this dialogue to Ministerial level. In judging the right time we have to be clear that Sinn Fein is willing to address all the necessary issues and that progress has been made in having a serious and substantive exploration of them.

We would need to be clear that, if and when they take part, constructive discussion - particularly in achieving substantial progress on the decommissioning of arms - will be facilitated and accelerated by their joining the dialogue. We look to Sinn Fein to provide the assurance that this is so.

Following that, we need to be clear, for example, that they will join in exploring the various modalities of decommissioning of arms. This would include procedures for verification, the need for independent supervision of the destruction of arms, the different methods of decommissioning and certain practical and legal considerations.

So we shall be pressing to achieve three things:

- A willingness in principle to disarm progressively;
- A common practical understanding of the modalities, that is to say, what decommissioning would actually entail;
- In order to test the practical arrangements and to demonstrate good faith, the actual decommissioning of some arms as a tangible confidence building measure and to signal the start of a process.

That is how Sinn Fein can remove their self imposed disqualification, and take their place at the talks table where a lasting settlement can be negotiated upon equal terms.