

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Anglo - Irish Division

Current Issues

This note has been prepared under three main headings :

Political Developments
Security, Confidence and East-West Political Issues
Social and Economic Issues

Political Developments

The Peace Process

1. Since the launching of the three-stranded negotiations in 1991, successive Irish and British Governments have worked together in pursuit of a lasting peace based on a political settlement addressing comprehensively relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands. The principles underlying this strategy and the outline of a possible agreement were set out by the Governments in the Joint Declaration and the Joint Framework Document respectively. The essential task for the two Governments is to persuade the Northern Ireland parties that agreement along those lines would be reasonable, honourable, and in the best interests of the communities they represent.

2. Following the failure of the first attempt at three-stranded negotiations (involving the two Governments, the UUP, SDLP, DUP and Alliance) in 1992 , the Governments attempted to relaunch the process, if possible on an inclusive basis with the involvement of Sinn Féin and representatives of the loyalist paramilitaries. The IRA and loyalist ceasefires of autumn 1994 offered a very real opportunity to achieve this, but the IRA ceasefire collapsed on 9 February 1996, just at the moment when a breakthrough appeared to be in the offing on the launch of negotiations.

The Negotiations

3. Multi-party negotiations were opened on 10 June 1996 involving the two Governments and nine of the ten parties[1] deemed eligible to participate on the basis of special elections held in Northern Ireland held on 30 May. Sinn Féin were excluded, but the Governments made it clear that Sinn Féin could enter the negotiations on the basis of the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994.

4. These negotiations enjoy a number of advantages over the 1991-92 format, including the involvement of three international chairmen (former leader of the US Senate, George Mitchell, former Prime Minister of Finland, Harri Holkeri, and former Chief of Staff of the

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[1] Alliance, Labour, NI Women's Coalition, PUP, SDLP, Sinn Féin, UDP, DUP, UKUP and UUP.

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Canadian Armed Forces, Gen. John de Chastelain) and a set of agreed rules of procedure which guarantee, inter alia, that a participant may raise any significant issues of concern to them and receive a fair hearing for those concerns. The rules of procedure also provide for decisions to be taken on the basis of sufficient consensus, requiring the agreement of parties representing a majority of the nationalist and unionist parties and a majority of the participating parties. In practice, this means that progress can be achieved on the basis of agreement between the SDLP on the nationalist side, the UUP and the loyalist parties on the unionist side, plus Alliance.

5. Despite this, apart from agreement on the appointment of the Chairmen and the rules of procedure, progress in the negotiations has been disappointingly slow. Two items still remain to be dealt with before substantive negotiations can get under way: decommissioning and the adoption of a comprehensive agenda for the negotiations in the three strands. However, there is already broad agreement on the latter between the UUP, SDLP, Alliance and the two Governments and it is not expected to be an obstacle to progress once the issue of decommissioning has been disposed of.

Decommissioning

6. The issue of the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and particularly the demand for the surrender of some IRA weapons before Sinn Féin be permitted to political negotiations has dogged all efforts at political progress since the IRA ceasefire of August 1994.

7. The International Body, established by the two Governments under the Chairmanship of George Mitchell, proposed that, in an effort to break the impasse, "the parties should consider an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge". The International Body also set out six principles of democracy and non-violence to which they recommended all participants in the negotiations should affirm their commitment.

reported in January '96

8. The Governments accepted the International Body's Report as the only viable basis on which to make progress on decommissioning. They agreed that all parties should affirm their commitment to the Mitchell Principles at the outset of the negotiations and that they themselves would review the continued participation in the negotiations of any party deemed to have demonstrably dishonoured its commitment to those principles. They also agreed that the participants should address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning at the beginning of the negotiations.

9. The negotiations have been stalled on this address since October of last year. The UUP, DUP and Bob McCartney's UK Unionist Party, have all used decommissioning as a device to ward off the possibility of Sinn Féin's entry to the negotiations by setting unrealisable demands for decommissioning before Sinn Féin's entry to the negotiations.

10. The UUP are the key to progress, since flexibility on their part would enable progress to be achieved on the basis of sufficient consensus. Prior to last month's elections in

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Northern Ireland, Trimble, no doubt fearful of exposing any flank to Paisley and McCartney, used decommissioning to ensure the fulfilment of his earlier prophecy that there would be no progress in the negotiations before the elections.

11. What the Governments now have to determine is whether Trimble is now ready to drop his demand that the IRA surrender some arms before Sinn Féin can enter substantive negotiations and allow decommissioning to be handled in a way that does not block progress towards a political settlement. The Governments have agreed proposals which would provide for progress on the basis of the implementation of all aspects of the Report of the International Body. This will include the establishment of an independent commission and the establishment of a committee of the plenary within negotiations to liaise with the commission and consider the confidence -building measures envisaged by the International Body. Crucially, the proposals also provide for the launch of substantive negotiations on 15 September.

12. If Trimble refuses to support the Governments proposals, he may seek to revive his suggestion of pigeon-holing the decommissioning issue unless and until Sinn Féin enters the talks. Such an approach would make sense only if it were evident that Sinn Féin were unlikely to enter the negotiations for some time. Even so, if Trimble's idea is eventually considered, the Governments are resolved to make clear that they could not envisage decommissioning being dealt with at a later stage other than on the basis of their proposals.

13. If, despite their best efforts, the Governments are not able to overcome the decommissioning roadblock, they will have to consider moving the process forward in a looser format which would give unionists less scope to prevent the inclusion of Sinn Féin in negotiations.

Prospects for an IRA ceasefire

14. Since the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire on 9 February 1996, there have been several attempts to bring about its restoration. Earlier efforts, brokered by John Hume, foundered on the deep distrust between the republican movement and the Major Government. The election of a new British Government has offered some hope that progress can now be made. Prime Minister Blair's swift decision to sanction contact between British officials and Sinn Féin led to the handing over to Sinn Féin on 13 June of an aide-memoire drawn up by the British Government which took account of advice from Dublin and Washington.

15. Responding to four points identified by Sinn Féin in October of last year as requiring clarification in advance of the restoration of the IRA ceasefire, the aide- memoire indicated that the British Government would be prepared to see Sinn Féin enter the negotiations six weeks after a ceasefire judged to be unequivocal; that the two Governments intended that decommissioning would be progressed on the basis of all aspects of the Mitchell Report; that the target date for the completion of the negotiations was next May, and that the British Government intended to introduce confidence building measures on a wide range of issues of concern to the nationalist community in general and Sinn Féin in particular.

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16. Irish officials met Sinn Féin the day following the handing over of the memorandum and informed Sinn Féin that the Government regarded the aide-memoire as offering the clarification sought by Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin reaction appeared to be reasonably positive, but two days later the IRA murdered two RUC officers in Lurgan and both Governments broke off direct contact with Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin have subsequently sought to signal a positive response to the British aide-memoire, although Gerry Adams has also written to Tony Blair highlighting the need for further reassurance on decommissioning and setting out a further lengthy list of points requiring clarification.

17. A matter of priority for the new Government will be to test the true intentions of the republican movement as regards its commitment to peaceful and democratic means and its interest in joining the existing talks process.

The loyalist ceasefire

18. While loyalists claim that the CLMC ceasefire is still in place, it is beyond dispute that each of the paramilitary organisations subscribing to the CLMC has committed acts of violence since the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire. This has led to the right of the PUP and UDP to remain in the negotiations being challenged, at different times, by the UKUP, the DUP and Alliance. (The so-called Loyalist Volunteer Force, composed mainly of UVF dissidents drawn from the mid-Ulster area, has also carried out a number of atrocities but is acknowledged to be outside the influence of the CLMC.)

19. The Governments, while privately accepting that there have been breaches of the CLMC ceasefire, have so far avoided a decision to expel the loyalist parties from the talks, thereby incurring charges of applying double standards.

20. In taking this line, the Irish Government has been influenced by a number of factors, not least that the presence of the loyalist parties in the talks: (a) almost certainly serves to limit the level of loyalist violence; (b) assists in the achievement of sufficient consensus within the negotiations; and © brings to the negotiations a more enlightened approach to the need for political accommodation than is evident from the "mainstream"unionist parties. Nevertheless, continued and escalating violence by groups coming under the CLMC will make it increasingly difficult for the Governments to resist further calls for the expulsion of the loyalist parties .

The position of the SDLP

21. The Government will wish to take every opportunity to listen to the concerns of the SDLP, who have suffered at the hands of Sinn Féin in the recent elections. While their share of the total vote held up well in the Westminster elections, they dropped a seat, while Sinn Féin both boosted their vote and gained two seats. Even worse were the local elections, where the SDLP lost out heavily to Sinn Féin, although the impact was masked by an overall rise in the nationalist vote which saw nationalists gain control in a number of councils.

22. SDLP activists have been badly rattled by these developments which can be traced to

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a number of causes, not least the fall-out from Drumcree, the failure to bring on young candidates and the fact that Sinn Féin have the advantage of a full-time and highly energetic electoral machine. However, there is also increasing resentment at what some in the party perceive as John Hume's readiness to put his commitment to the "peace process" before the interests of the party. There is irritation too at the British and Irish Governments, who are blamed by some for agreeing to the elections of 30 May 1996, which marked the beginning of the surge in Sinn Féin's electoral performance, and for having failed to deliver any progress in the negotiations.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement

23. It is suggested that the new Government seek an early meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, which has yet to meet under the new British Government. The fact that there is a Labour Party Government in London for the first time since the inception of the Anglo-Irish Agreement offers the possibility of a more positive British attitude on several socio-economic issues where we would like to see progress, particularly in the area of cross-border cooperation.

Security, Confidence and East-West Political Issues

The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and Confidence Issues

24. The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference provides the main forum for discussion of security and confidence issues at Ministerial level. Such issues are also pursued on an ongoing basis via the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in Belfast and the London Embassy.

25. At meetings of the Conference, Ministers meet in a restricted format, with the Garda Commissioner and the RUC Chief Constable and a limited number of officials in attendance, to consider the current security situation and the threat posed by subversive groups. It may be expected that the next Conference meeting will focus on an assessment of the state of play within the Sinn Féin/IRA leadership (assuming that a cease-fire has not been called in the interim) and of the extent of loyalist paramilitary activity following the recent murder of RUC officers Graham and Johnstone in Lurgan and as the marching season reaches its climax.

26. The general security situation, including the prospects for the marching season (see below) and a range of confidence issues such as prisoners and policing form a regular part of the plenary agenda at Conference meetings and are pursued at official level via the Secretariat. Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 this has provided an effective means of pursuing confidence issues of concern to the nationalist community. However, in the latter period of the previous British Conservative administration NIO Ministers appeared increasingly sensitive to Unionist concerns regarding the operation of the Agreement and its institutions, particularly in the security and confidence areas. This, allied with the longstanding lack of enthusiasm of elements of the Northern civil service in engaging with our side in the Conference framework, may have been reflected in some deterioration in the quality of responses to representations made by our side via the Secretariat.

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27. The Agreement has also provided the framework for the raising of individual cases where concerns exist about a possible miscarriage of justice. Following the recent establishment of a Criminal Cases Review Commission, the NIO have indicated that they would expect our side to pursue such cases directly in future with the Commission, which is based in Birmingham. We have resisted this approach and would wish to maintain, in particular, the right of the Minister to raise such cases directly with the Secretary of State within the Conference framework and to have them pursued via the Secretariat.

28. Although the new British Labour administration have indicated a commitment to the structures of Anglo-Irish co-operation, it may be noted that the Secretary of State, Mo Mowlam, has also spoken of the need for greater transparency in the operation of the Conference and the Secretariat. **The Minister may wish to avail of the next formal meeting of the Conference to reiterate the importance of a joint commitment to effectively working the Anglo-Irish Agreement and its institutions, particularly in relation to the raising of confidence issues and individual cases at political level.**

The Marching Season

29. The Marching Season, which approaches it climax in the next few weeks is, of course, the dominant security and confidence issue to be faced in the short-term. There are about 3,000 marches involving the "loyal Orders" during the season from April to September but following last year's debacle at Drumcree most attention focuses again on that parade and the question of whether the Orange marchers will be allowed down the nationalist Garvaghy Road on their return route to the centre of Portadown. Tension will also be high in Derry on 12 July, when the Orange Order will hold its main Co. Derry parade in the City (on a five year cycle) and again on 9 August when the Apprentice Boys hold their parade commemorating the lifting of the siege of Derry. There are a number of other potential trouble spots in the weeks ahead, including Bellaghy (where an Orange march passed off peacefully last week-end with a very heavy RUC presence), Dunloy and Newtownbutler. The announcement on 21 June by the clergy of Harryville parish in Ballymena that they are suspending the Saturday evening Mass for the remainder of the marching season is likely to have defused the situation there, at least in the short-term.

30. The Drumcree parade is scheduled for Sunday, 6 July. The Secretary of State and the RUC Chief Constable have already made clear that a decision on whether the Orange marchers will be allowed down the Garvaghy Road will be announced some days beforehand and, in contrast to last year, will not be altered. The Secretary of State has herself been engaged in a round of meetings with residents groups and the marching Orders in an effort to defuse the Drumcree situation in particular. John Hume has also been engaged in discussions with David Trimble on the issue. While there has been some speculation that the newly-established Parade Commission will recommend that some form of march be allowed on the Garvaghy Road, there is as yet no firm indication as to what the Secretary of State's decision will be. In broad terms there are three options: (I) ban a march on the Garvaghy Road, (ii) allow a parade on the road (which might be limited in some way e.g. to "local" Orangemen) and (iii) re-route the parade so that it avoids most of the Garvaghy area (there is a route available which involves a turn-off leading back along the outgoing route before the main

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Garvaghy Road is reached). Mo Mowlam has, however, made clear that she will use the British Army to keep access routes to ports and airports open in the event of a repeat of the disorder of last year.

31. The Anglo-Irish Division is closely monitoring the evolution of the marching season and maintaining contact with the SDLP and local resident groups. **The Minister may wish in an early contact with the Secretary of State to emphasise the need for the closest consultation in relation to the situation at Drumcree/Garvaghy Road. The marching season will, of course, be a major issue on the agenda of the next Conference meeting.**

Prisoner Issues

32. The treatment of prisoners is recognised as a key confidence issue e.g. in the Mitchell Report and in recent exchanges aimed at bringing about a lasting ceasefire. Republican prisoners played a role in bolstering support within their movement for the original IRA ceasefire of August 1994. Conditions for both Republican and loyalist prisoners in the North's prisons are generally perceived to be substantially better than in English prisons and much of the recent discussion of prisoner issues in the Conference framework has focussed on the conditions of Republican prisoners in Britain.

33. The case of Róisín McAliskey has been closely monitored by the Department in recent months. Her release on bail to the Maudsley hospital in London following the birth of her daughter has lessened immediate concerns about her situation but the question of her extradition to Germany remains moot and legal proceedings are likely to continue for some time. There have been some indictions that the new Labour Government, including Home Office Ministers, may be more open than their predecessors to the concerns expressed about this case and prisoner issues generally. Since Labour came to power, two prisoners (Danny McNamee and Liam McCotter) have been transferred to Northern Ireland.

34. Six Republican prisoners have been transferred to this jurisdiction from England since the coming into force of the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons in November 1995. A further four transfers have been agreed by the Minister for Justice. In all, 14 convicted Republican prisoners out of a current total of 16 in English prisons have applied for transfer here. There are also 13 remand Republican prisoners held in England.

35. In terms of the treatment of Republican prisoners in English prisons, the main concerns relate to the conditions in the Special Secure Units where most of these prisoners, both convicted and remand, are held by virtue of their security classification. These prisoners are not allowed open family visits and serious humanitarian concerns have been expressed about the Units, including by Amnesty International and the British Government's former Chief Medical Officer.

36. Individual cases, where there are strong grounds to suspect a miscarriage of justice, are regularly raised in the Conference framework. These would currently include the cases of Danny McNamee, John Kinsella and the Casement Three (one of the latter, Patrick Kane, was released from prison on 19 June following the success of his appeal in the Belfast High

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Court).

37. At the next Conference meeting, **the Minister may wish to renew our concern about conditions in the Special Secure Units and desire to speed up prisoner transfers.**

Relations between the Security Forces and the Community

38. This is a standard item on the Conference agenda and our immediate concern will be to avoid a repeat of the events of last summer, following the standoff at Drumcree, when relations between the nationalist community and the RUC were seriously and perhaps permanently damaged by the sudden reversal of the decision not to allow the Orange marchers down the Garvaghy Road and the subsequent extensive use of plastic bullets in nationalist areas (over 6,000 in the few days following Drumcree compared to approximately 600 used against Orange rioters during the standoff). Renewed concerns have also arisen about the use of plastic bullets (or PBRs - Plastic Baton Rounds - as they are officially described) following the revelation that defective rounds were in use during the past year.

39. The increase in IRA activity in Northern Ireland since late 1996 has been accompanied by evidence of a response in the form of increased activity by RUC and British Army undercover units e.g. in incidents at Coalisland RUC station and the Derryhirk Inn at Aghallon in recent months. **The Minister may wish to reiterate our consistent position that the security forces must at all times be seen to operate within the rule of law and to urge that the use of plastic bullets should be restrained to the maximum extent possible in the difficult period ahead.**

Reform of the RUC

40. The Secretary of State has indicated that she will proceed with legislation based on a number of studies over the past two years, including a White Paper, which would involve some adjustment of internal RUC structures and the tripartite relationship between her office, the RUC and Police Authority. There is no indication, however, that this reform will be of the fundamental nature required to secure nationalist confidence in the RUC and the Secretary of State has indicated some doubts about whether the name and symbols of the Force are an issue to be tackled in the short-term. Even the limited changes which she has flagged have already been criticised by unionist sources and from within the RUC itself e.g. at the recent annual meeting of the RUC Federation.

41. The reaction to the murder of the two RUC officers in Lurgan may further reduce the likelihood of significant change in the near future and this is certainly unlikely in the absence of a lasting IRA ceasefire. The RUC Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, presents the force as caught in the middle between the two conflicting positions on the parades issue and the recent murder of RUC Constable Greg Taylor by loyalists, apparently because of his involvement in policing an Orange march in Dunloy, has further highlighted the pressures the force is under from within the unionist community.

42. The SDLP spokesman on security and justice, Séamus Mallon, has consistently

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emphasised the need for fundamental reform of the RUC to be addressed as part of the substantive three-stranded negotiations. **Our view that such reform is essential if the nationalist community are to identify with future policing structures for the North might be reiterated at the next Conference meeting. At the same time the Minister might wish to acknowledge the loss of the two officers in Lurgan and the difficult situation facing the RUC in the weeks ahead and point to the continuing close co-operation in security matters with the Garda.**

Bloody Sunday

43. The Government's Assessment of the new and re-evaluated material relating to Bloody Sunday and its implications for the Widgery Report was transmitted within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 24 June 1997. The Assessment concludes that "The new material fatally undermines and discredits the Widgery Report...It must be replaced by a clear and truthful account of events on that day...the most appropriate and convincing redress would be a new Report, based on a new independent inquiry." **The Minister may wish to indicate to the Secretary of State that we look forward to an early follow-up in the spirit of remarks which she has already made recognising the suffering of the relatives of those who died.**

East-West Political Issues

44. The Agreed Programme commits the Government to developing a new quality in British-Irish relations. The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council framework established in the early 1980s has been little used in the formal sense in recent years and there is considerable potential, as recognised by Tony Blair and the outgoing Taoiseach in a recent joint statement, to enhance East-West co-operation. The new British Labour Government is, of course, in a dominant position at Westminster for the foreseeable future and probably extending into the ten year lifetime of two parliaments. However, some elements of the Labour Party are receptive to the arguments of David Trimble that a new focus on a "British Isles" framework should be used to replace the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Trimble has also sought to encourage these elements to promote the Labour Party's proposals for Scottish and Welsh devolution as a model for the North. The new NIO Ministerial team has also shown some interest in increasing the powers of local government in the North, despite the concerns of the SDLP in this regard.

45. The indications to date are that the Secretary of State and her colleagues in the British Government recognise the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and are committed to a joint approach based on the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Documents. However, we will need to ensure that any proposals for a deepening of East-West co-operation are clearly in the three-stranded context, particularly if they are brought forward in any sense as an alternative to the current talks process or as a "Plan B".

46. The British-Irish Interparliamentary Body also has its origins in the institutional developments of the early 1980s. Its membership of 25 full members and 20 associates on each side will now be renewed in the aftermath of the two elections and new joint chairmen

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will also be appointed to reflect the change in Governments. The Steering Committee meeting in London on 7 July will provide the first opportunity to review recent developments and the next plenary meeting is scheduled to take place in London at the beginning of December. Two seats on the British side are reserved for the Unionist parties, who have to date refused to participate in the Body.

Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust (ISSLT)

47. This trust, which was established to provide homes for Irish and British ex-servicemen from the British forces, is being wound up in the near future. Under the ISSLT Act 1988, monies which will accrue to the Exchequer from the winding up, may be spent for a variety of purposes on the direction of the Taoiseach. About £1 million is expected to be realised and the Embassy London have submitted proposals for spending part of this amount on the promotion of Irish studies in Britain.

Social and Economic Issues

North-South Social and Economic Co-operation.

48. The framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference is the primary mechanism for co-operation between the two Governments on North-South social and economic co-operation - Article 10 of the Agreement stipulated that ' the Conference shall be a framework for the promotion of co-operation between the two parts of Ireland concerning cross-border aspects of economic, social and cultural matters.'

49. A number of initiatives have been taken by the Conference to promote North-South co-operation in a wide range of sectors. However, meetings of the Conference have, inevitably, been dominated by political and security-related issues. It would be useful to consider in the near future how social and economic affairs could be treated more substantively in the framework of the Conference. The more systematic assessment of the range of cross-border social and economic co-operation, as agreed in the course of the 1989 review of the Conference's work, could perhaps be better achieved through having periodic meetings of the Conference dedicated to North-South social and economic issues, or through having specific time slots allocated for these issues at meetings of the Conference. This could facilitate a thorough review of the existing structures for co-operation and identify where improvements can be made, thus demonstrating political commitment to the cross-border dimension and also engaging Departments more deeply in the work of the Conference.

50. In addition to his responsibilities in the Security and Economic Development areas in Northern Ireland, Minister Adam Ingram has oversight over all matters relating to North-South co-operation in economic and social areas, as well as security. While it would be premature to reach any conclusions, not least on account of the new British Administration's preoccupations with handling pressing political and security issues, Minister Ingram's approach to North-South cooperation has been cautious to date. Conscious of the prospect of a negative unionist reaction to any proposals for increased North-south economic co-operation, Ingram has asked that, in further work in Belfast on the scope for new North-

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South co-operation, special focus should be placed on projects which would result in evident, demonstrable and tangible benefits for the people of Northern Ireland.

EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

51. The EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation is the central instrument in the economic underpinning of the peace process. It is a specific mechanism for tackling social and economic problems, many of which may have contributed to and sustained violence. In its first phase, 1995-1997, the Programme received 300 MECU by way of EU funding.

52. While the EU Budget for 1998 will not be adopted until later in the year, the budgetary process, involving both the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, has already begun on the basis of the Commission's draft 1998 budget. This includes a provision for 100 MECU for the Programme, but not under a specific budgetary line. As in the 1997 budget, funding for the Programme in 1988 is provided for in the Commission's draft budget by way of a 'negative reserve' mechanism; under this, the funding will come from under-utilised financial provisions elsewhere in the budget.

53. The elaboration of the 1998 EU Budget requires continuing attention to ensure that the Programme will receive funding in 1998 at the same level which it has enjoyed since 1995, i.e., 100 MECU. It will, in the course of the negotiations on the 1998 EU Budget, also be necessary to guard against attempts to have the Programme funded by way of contributions from our own Structural Funds (with analogous funding from the British side), rather than as proposed by the Commission. Moreover, at this particularly sensitive time in the peace process, we wish to avoid any calling into question of the funding for the Peace Programme.

Other confidence-building measures.

54. The next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference may afford an opportunity to:-

Review developments on the proposed extension of **RTE's reception in N. Ireland**;

Underline the British Government's responsibilities, under Article 6 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to work towards balanced representation on **Public Bodies in N. Ireland**.

55. It would be appropriate to review **Irish language issues** at official level through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat with a view to including them as an agenda item at a forthcoming Conference.[The NIO's 13 June Aide Memoire to Sinn Féin flagged the Irish language issue as a possible confidence-building measure.]

East-West Economic Co-operation

56. Within the framework of a Steering Group which is jointly chaired by Senior officials

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of the Taoiseach's Department and the British Prime Minister's Office, there have been considerable efforts since late 1995 to develop East-West Social and Economic Co-operation. In pursuing these issues, we have been conscious of the need to ensure that progress in East-West relations should not become an alternative to progress in the current talks process. Bilateral Summit Meetings take stock of progress on East-West co-operation. A Joint Statement of Intent on Co-operation was agreed at the Summit Meeting on 23 May 1997. This noted the substantial degree of co-operation which was already taking place, and also identified a number of options for new co-operation. The Steering Group on East-West Co-operation, which includes representation from Department of Foreign Affairs, could be the appropriate mechanism for developing a new quality in British-Irish relations in the social and economic areas.

Anglo-Irish Division
25 June 1997

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