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# McAleese statement on Omagh anniversary

Statement by President McAleese on the 10th Anniversary of the terrorist atrocity in Omagh.

Ten years after the horrific destruction wrought by the Omagh bomb, our thoughts and prayers remain with all those who suffered so cruelly from the evil perpetrated on that dreadful day in August 1998. Coming as it did just a few short months after the overwhelming endorsement of the Good Friday Agreement, it seemed designed not just wilfully to kill and maim innocent people going about their everyday lives, but also to smother in anger and despair the seeds of a new future that had just been sown in such hope.

In the following days, weeks and months, however, the people of Omagh, drawing on support from all over Ireland and indeed all over the world, demonstrated that the will towards peace and reconciliation embodied in the Agreement was stronger and more powerful than any bomb or bullet, or any attempt by the few to drag us back into the futility of violence and division. Far from fragmenting along the familiar dividing lines as they could easily have done, the people of Omagh, of all persuasions, embraced each other as family, as friends, as one suffering community. In doing so, they helped all of us to appreciate in the starkest terms just how precious the opportunity was that had just been given to us to make a new beginning, and how vital it was that we all worked together to turn that opportunity into reality.

A decade later, though they each still live with a profound loss and hurt that can never be fully assuaged, the people of Omagh can take rightful pride in the remarkable contribution they made to the consolidation of an historic peace that is surely growing and deepening by the day. Sadly, Omagh 1998 will always be remembered for the horrific loss of innocent life and the terrible suffering caused to so many. But the way that its people responded to that tragedy will also mark Omagh 1998 as a monument to the triumph of hope over despair and to the reality that a truly new dawn had finally broken in Ireland.

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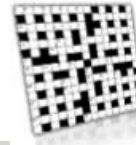
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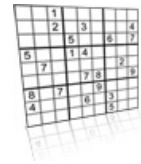
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