



Press Release

Embargoed to 16.15 on 6 August 2001 Women's Coalition announce package response

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has announced its intention to accept the Governments' proposals saying they regard them as pointing the direction society should move to eventually restore normality to Northern Ireland. NIWC spokespeople, Councillor Patricia Wallace, Baroness May Blood and Political Advisor, Kate Fearon, announced the party's position this afternoon.

Speaking at a press conference this afternoon, Political Advisor, Kate Fearon said:

"The Women's Coalition continues to believe that the Belfast Agreement offers the only opportunity for a new beginning for the relationships between the people and communities in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Britain. We believe that support for the Agreement remains strong amongst the population of Northern Ireland.

Building a peaceful society in Northern Ireland, through the Good Friday Agreement is a long-term project. In this context we believe that these proposals have the capacity to strengthen the foundation of that long-term aim. The governments have made clear that the proposals they set out on 1st August come as a package, that delivery on some is not possible unless there is delivery on all.

For some these proposals may go too far. For others, they may not go far enough. It is our belief that they strike the best possible balance at this time.

The signatories to the Good Friday Agreement committed themselves to using their best influence to bring about the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, under the auspices of the International Commission on Decommissioning. We believe that support for this package represents a positive way of asserting influence in this regard.

While it is useful that the governments have adopted a flexible approach to timing on responses to these proposals, we urge other parties to clarify their positions with regard to the proposals as near to the target date as possible.

While these proposals are not to our complete satisfaction, we believe they have the potential to further the Agreement, and create stability. There are risks for all, but great gains also.

We believe these proposals, particularly in the absence of any alternative suggestion from other parties, should be accepted and tested."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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A copy of the Women's Coalition response paper can be obtained by contacting Chris or Kate.