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Press Release

Monitoring Body a useful safeguard 4 September 2003

The Women's Coalition has welcomed the announcement that legislation for an Independent Monitoring Commission will be tabled on Monday. Monica McWilliams said the new body could provide the safeguards demanded by parties at talks in March, but said she was disappointed that there was no formal role for the Implementation Committee.

"The process has been plagued by the lack of independent assessment on paramilitary activity, and we hope this Commission will provide that. It is in the interests of all parties to the political process that we have an independent and accurate account of the situation. It will help the players in this process and the general public to understand the whole picture, distinguishing accusations and rumours from fact.

"In terms of paramilitary activity and security normalisation, the Commission is only monitoring what has already been agreed by the parties, governments and groups on ceasefire. The proposals announced today mean the monitoring body's reports will be able to reflect the complexity of paramilitary structures and activity.

Parties were close to agreeing an outline for a monitoring body at talks in March. Since then the deficit of trust and the need for safeguards have not gone away and parties should reflect on this before rejecting the proposals announced today.

"While we welcome the government's Agreement, we are disappointed that there will be no formal role for the Implementation Committee in considering the reports of the Independent Monitoring Commission. Parties must start to take responsibility for this process and not rely on the government, or an independent Commission to resolve the difficulties. The proposals refer to consultation with all interested parties, but this is not a strong enough guarantee that pro-Agreement parties will be involved in its work."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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