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**HMG's AIDE MEMOIRE OF 13 JUNE: SPEAKING NOTES**

A number of questions have been raised about the British Government's Aide Memoire, sent to Sinn Féin on 13 June and published on 25 June. This document is not, of course, formally part of this debate on decommissioning. It is not for negotiation, either here or anywhere else: it simply describes the British Government's position, drawing in particular on the legal requirements governing participation in these negotiations.

But, as we have made clear, we want no genuine doubt or uncertainty to remain as to our position. In that context, I think it would be helpful for the British Government to make clear the following points

The Government is determined to see political negotiations under way from 15 September, as proposed in the possible conclusions tabled by both Governments. It wants Sinn Féin to participate in those negotiations from 15 September which, as explained in the Aide Memoire, means a genuine and unequivocal ceasefire needs to be declared some 6 weeks earlier, with words and deeds matching over that subsequent period. But, as the Government has also made clear, it will proceed with substantive political negotiations from 15 September without Sinn Féin if necessary;

Sinn Féin's entry is governed by the legal requirements set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the "Groundrules for Substantive All-Party Negotiations", which must be reflected in word and deed. A decision to issue an invitation under the terms of the relevant Act is for the Secretary of State alone. She is legally obliged to issue an invitation when she considers the requirements are met, having made a political judgement of all the circumstances in the round. But, following the declaration of a ceasefire, the Government would want to consult with all the participants as to the practical implications of it for the negotiations;



Participants can only take part in these negotiations, in any format, after they have received an invitation from the Secretary of State under the relevant Act. As the Aide Memoire made clear, following a ceasefire declaration a period of some 6 weeks will be needed to assess a ceasefire to see that words and deeds are matching before a judgement can be made as to whether the requirements of the Act are met. But, as the Aide Memoire also made clear, this period of some 6 weeks should be used constructively to take account of the needs of all parties. The Aide Memoire set out a range of activity that would accordingly be possible within this period until the Secretary of State reached her judgement;

● The Government takes the view that Sinn Féin and the IRA are inextricably linked. Sinn Féin's participation in these negotiations is dependent on there being an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire. Once Sinn Féin join the negotiations, the legal requirements having been met, they will first need to make their total and absolute commitment to the six Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence. Any party which demonstrably dishonours its commitment to the six Mitchell principles will no longer be entitled to participate. The rules provide that any participant may make a formal representation to this effect but appropriate action is for the Governments, having due regard to the views of the participants. A resumption of IRA violence would bring this procedure into play.

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