

Statement by Senator George J Mitchell
Castle Buildings, Belfast, Northern Ireland
June 12, 1996

On behalf of my colleagues, General de Chastelain and Prime Minister Holkeri, I thank you.

We are honored by the invitation to participate in these historic proceedings. We commend Prime Ministers Major and Bruton, Secretary of State Mayhew and Minister for Foreign Affairs Spring, those of you here today, and the many others across Northern Ireland who have contributed to this process. Our prior participation in this process has brought us into extensive contact with the people of Northern Ireland. We have come to know and admire them.

We assure you that we are motivated solely by a desire to be of help to you and to them. We will meet our responsibilities in a totally fair and impartial manner.

We recognize that it is you who must make the decisions on which these proceedings will advance. We will do all we appropriately can to be of assistance. But ultimately agreement in these negotiations is a matter for the participants. That is why the success of these proceedings rests on your shoulders and in your hearts.

That is an immense responsibility.

It is also a great and noble challenge. I hope that everyone involved can rise to meet that challenge.

As we said in the report we submitted to the governments on January 24, in words we believe are even more relevant today: "The risk may seem high but the reward is great: a future of peace, equality and prosperity for all the people of Northern Ireland".