

(20 February 1998)

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS**

**Invitation to the UDP to rejoin the negotiations**

The two Governments have always made it clear that they want to see a fully inclusive talks process. Equally all the parties must be around the table on the same basis - sharing a commitment to exclusively peaceful means and the democratic process.

On 26 January, the two Governments determined that the UDP's commitment to the Mitchell Principles had been demonstrably dishonoured and that the UDP was therefore no longer entitled to participate in the negotiations.

The determination stated that, "If over a period of weeks a complete, unequivocal and unqualified UFF ceasefire were demonstrated, and established through words and deeds to have been fully and continually observed, the Governments would consider the possibility of the UDP rejoining the negotiations".

Paul Murphy MP held a meeting with a UDP delegation on 12 February to discuss their rejoining the process. They brought out the fact that the version of the UFF statement of 23 January which was attached to the two Governments' determination of 26 January was not a completely accurate version. In an interview after the meeting Gary McMichael stated that, "The UFF statement of 23 January was an unequivocal restoration of its ceasefire". Paul Murphy indicated following that meeting that the UDP could rejoin the process by the end of February if the evidence continued to be consistent with a complete, unequivocal and unqualified ceasefire by the UFF.

The two Governments are now satisfied that the existence of such a ceasefire has been demonstrated.

Accordingly, they have therefore decided that, subject to events on the ground, the UDP should be invited to rejoin the talks process from Monday 23 February.