

23 July 1997

**Joint statement by the British and Irish Governments**  
**Wednesday 23 July 1997**

The talks process goes on. Both Governments are firmly committed to substantive political negotiations starting on 15 September. We will hold to that and will take all necessary steps to ensure it happens.

We want these negotiations to be as inclusive as possible. We will continue to work with all the parties to achieve that.

We regret that, more than a year since they began, the negotiations have yet to move out of the opening Plenary because of the decommissioning issue.

The best and only realistic way to resolve the issue is on the basis of implementing all aspects of the Mitchell report. The two Governments' joint proposals offer a fair and balanced approach to this. The proposals have been extensively clarified, in an effort to show how they met all sides' concerns. Both Governments stand by these proposals.

We will continue to work with all the parties to prepare for the start of political negotiations on 15 September.

Following Monday's Plenary, the Secretary of State and the Minister for Foreign Affairs will meet on Tuesday to begin the necessary preparations for the start of substantive negotiations on 15 September.

We invite all parties, in the context of their own preparatory work, to consult with us during this period in whatever form may be convenient.