



NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

23 September 1997

STATEMENT TO PLENARY BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, this afternoon outlined to delegates the procedures laid down for the formal handling of complaints against participants in the talks process.

Dr Mowlam also underlined the duty of impartiality required of the two Governments in this quasi-judicial process. She said:

"As Rule 29 makes clear, it is for the Governments to consider the representations and views expressed, and then to decide on appropriate action. The Governments must show absolute impartiality in these proceedings.

"The judgement to be reached is whether a party has demonstrably dishonoured its commitment to the Mitchell principles. The Governments made clear when earlier representations were considered that for such a finding to be made, there has to be a clear and unmistakable demonstration that there had been a dishonouring of the commitment.

"If that is shown, however, only one course is possible: the party concerned cannot be allowed to remain within the talks. Strict observance of the principles of democracy and non-violence is the only basis on which these talks can achieve success.

"There is therefore a heavy responsibility on the Governments to be fair, and to be seen to be fair. Our role this afternoon will, therefore, be chiefly to listen.

"We are anxious to hear the views of all delegations. We shall then reach our conclusions, in the light of the representation, what has been said in response and by other delegations, and also of all the other evidence available to us.

"We shall announce our decision during the course of tomorrow."

In response to the questions put to her by Mr Ken Maginnis, the Secretary of State said:

"I have listened carefully to Ken Maginnis. On the specific questions he put to me, let me just say that of course I stand by the words of the Prime Minister, Paul Murphy, and my own words. I have listened carefully to Gerry Adams too, and his response."