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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 31 1996

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams, speaking on the day which marks two years since the IRA cessation of August 1994 pointed out that: "It is a grave indictment of British government policy and unionist intransigence that two years later there has still not been a single word of real negotiation."

The Sinn Féin President said: "It is still not too late to find a way through the difficulties facing us and rekindle the hope that was born two years ago."

Mr Adams urged: "The onus is now on the British and Irish governments to take a new initiative for peace - to lead all of the parties away from the failures of the past towards a new and brighter future."

Exclusion is a failed policy which blocks progress and can have no place in any real efforts to build a peace process. The rights of the Sinn Féin electorate should be recognised by both the Irish and the British governments.

But clearly, there are a number of items which stand out in bold relief if a genuine process of negotiations is to be constructed. Both governments need to build an inclusive process of negotiations based on equality, with no preconditions and which has all relevant issues on its agenda and works from the premise that nothing is agreed until all is agreed. There can be no vetoes and a time-frame is needed to inject the necessary dynamic for real progress. The British government has the primary responsibility in this and needs to provide assurances and take initiatives which build confidence and trust."

Mr Adams concluded: "The choices facing us are grave. Time is of the essence. Forward movement must no longer be held hostage to selfish interests; new initiatives are needed to end the uncertainty; a lasting peace needs all of us working together, playing our full part in

transforming our history of conflict into a future of progress and prosperity.

To succeed it requires a partnership between all those of goodwill and leadership from the two governments.

Full text of Mr Adams statement:

It is a grave indictment of British government policy and unionist intransigence that two years on from the IRAs historic announcement of a 'complete cessation, on August 31 1994, that there has still not been a single word of real negotiation.

Moreover, it is clear that the talks process at Stormont lacks any credibility and that most observers and the public accept that it is incapable of producing a peace settlement.

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The ruins of the peace process stand as a tragic testimony to the failure of the British government and the unionist leaderships to see beyond their own narrow interests.

It is a far cry from the hope born two years ago when a unique opportunity for a lasting peace was opened up by the combined efforts of Irish nationalist opinion and Irish/America.

To succeed it required a good faith engagement on all sides and a willingness to reach out to former opponents with generosity and flexibility. Regrettably the British government failed to respond in a positive way to the opportunity presented to it. This was in sharp contrast to the promises of British Ministers in recent years. In November 1990 the then British Secretary of State Peter Brooke claimed that Britain has *'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland: Our role is to help, enable and encourage. Britain's purpose is not to occupy, oppress or exploit but to ensure democratic debate and democratic choice. That is our way'*.

Those sentiments was repeated often in the Downing Street Declaration and in the Framework document and in many other speeches and statements. British Ministers talked of an *'imaginative and generous'* response to an end to violence.

But none of this was ever evident in John Major's approach to the peace process. Instead of building confidence Britain eroded it by reneging on commitments publicly given to facilitate dialogue. Instead of

encouraging trust, by deed as well as word, the British government undermined trust through the release of Lee Clegg, the victimisation of political prisoners, the refusal to debate the issue of policing and the continuing denial of equality of treatment and much more.

Instead of consolidating the peace process by removing obstacles to negotiation and agreement the British government erected new obstacles. John Major and his government destroyed the peace process and created the conditions which led to the breakdown of the IRA cessation in February.

Since then the British have rejected the increased electoral mandate which Sinn Féin received in the elections in May - despite Mr Major's claim that *'once the elections are over the route to negotiations is clear, direct and automatic'*.

In addition, the Stormont talks have witnessed the British refusal to provide leadership or to *'encourage and facilitate'* dialogue and agreement. They have allowed the unionist leaderships to prevaricate and stall and turn the process so that it now lacks any credibility whatsoever.

However, it was the events around the siege of Garvaghy Road which exposed the British government as duplicitous and the unionist leaders as bigots.

Looking back over the past five years and in particular the last two years, it is clear that this British government never seriously tried to engage in a process which would bring about a democratic resolution. Its actions reinforce the view, shared by republicans and most nationalists in the six counties, that the real objective of the British government has been to divide and weaken the republican struggle and to continue to deny nationalists, trapped within the northern state, the equality and democracy which is their right.

However, despite the many set-backs; despite the bad faith; despite the failure of the British government to rise to the challenge of peace, Sinn Féin remains absolutely committed to our peace strategy.

There are many obvious lessons to be learned from recent events and the collapse of the peace process. If we are to build a new peace process and bridge the gulf of distrust which now exists we must learn those lessons, and the two governments in particular must act on them.

The onus is now on the British and Irish governments to take a new initiative for peace - to lead all of the parties away from the failures of the past towards a new and brighter future.

Exclusion is a failed policy which blocks progress and can have no place in any real efforts to build a peace process. The rights of the Sinn Féin electorate should be recognised by both the Irish and the British governments.

But clearly, there are a number of items which stand out in bold relief if a genuine process of negotiations is to be constructed. Both governments need to build an inclusive process of negotiations based on equality, with no preconditions and which has all relevant issues on its agenda and works from the premise that nothing is agreed until all is agreed. There can be no vetos and a time-frame is needed to inject the necessary dynamic for real progress. The British government has the primary responsibility in this and needs to provide assurances and take initiatives which build confidence and trust.

This is the way to advance the search for peace in Ireland. It is still not too late to find a way through the difficulties facing us and rekindle the hope that was born two years ago.

The choices facing us are grave. Time is of the essence. Forward movement must no longer be held hostage to selfish interests; new initiatives are needed to end the uncertainty; a lasting peace needs all of us working together, playing our full part in transforming our history of conflict into a future of progress and prosperity.

To succeed it requires a partnership between all those of goodwill and leadership from the two governments.