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Opening
Statements
file

FROM: JULIE MAPSTONE
IPL
4 SEPTEMBER 1996

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mrs Collins - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Mr Whysall - B

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) -B

TALKS: HMG OPENING STATEMENT
HMG OPENING STATEMENT ON DECOMMISSIONING

I attach a revised version of the HMG opening statement for the opening plenary. This has been updated and amended from the version circulated on 10 June, and approved then by Ministers. Our handling plan aims for early deployment of such opening statements.

2. This Opening Statement is intended to be an orthodox account of HMG's approach to the negotiations. It does not, at this stage therefore, incorporate the 'warmer' language on the Union which has been put to the Prime Minister. That has got to be approved by the Prime Minister and may be something which he would prefer to save for his own use.

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3. I also attach the draft plenary statement on decommissioning. This was previously circulated as an annex to Mr Stephens' paper of 7 August, Decommissioning - Avoiding Another Impasse. It is unlikely we shall reach this next week, and some amendment may yet be required in the light of negotiations next week - but Ministers might like to know that this statement is also ready for deployment if necessary.

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Principles of democracy and non-violence

4. For the last 25 years, all sections of the community in Northern Ireland have endured the deprivations that result from sustained violence. From the disruption of normal daily life and the damage to economic development, to the immense human suffering resulting from murder and maiming, the violence has affected everyone.

5. The Government joins the overwhelming number of the people of Northern Ireland in totally rejecting any attempt to promote political objectives by violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism has done great damage and inflicted immeasurable human suffering. More particularly, it has rendered the search for a just and lasting political settlement, as well as the achievement of economic prosperity, far more difficult, and it has also made necessary the substantial commitment of the armed forces in support

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