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SPEAKING NOTE: MEETING WITH JOHN HUME

1. We have considered carefully the possible questions you put forward. It must be clear that HMG cannot negotiate over a ceasefire.
2. The requirements which must be met are set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules. Our statement of 28 November explained the process involved for Sinn Féin to enter the negotiations. We stand by that and will not depart from it.
3. The (attached) answers we have prepared to the questions you put forward therefore reflect existing policy. If there is genuine doubt or uncertainty over what Sinn Féin and the IRA need to do to enter negotiations, we want to ensure our position is clearly and properly understood. But we cannot become drawn into negotiations over HMG's policy.
4. It is widely accepted that what lies at the heart of communal divisions in Northern Ireland is a lack of trust about the intentions of different sections of the community. There needs to be a reciprocal process of building trust and confidence; this is a two way street. We have therefore prepared some possible questions, which reflect our concerns and those of other participants. They illustrate the way that the process of confidence building requires a set of interlocking assurances.
5. The two lists of questions illustrate that some of the assurances sought reflect uncertainty about the good faith of the other side. This appears to be the case with the need for assurances that
 - the British Government remains committed to an inclusive process of negotiations;

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- that if Sinn Féin joins the talks they will abide by the rules of procedure and ground rules agreed by the participants;
 - that any future ceasefire by the IRA would be unequivocal and intended to be lasting;
 - that the talks process is genuine and will not be deliberately obstructed by the participants;
 - that all the relevant participants would take measures to develop confidence.
6. In addition to the above, other areas where there is a need for reassurance go to issues of process or timing. These include the need for an assurance that:
- Sinn Féin could join the inclusive talks within a defined timeframe, provided that the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules were met;
 - decommissioning, being dealt with to the satisfaction of all the participants, would begin in the context of progress on political issues, within an overall timeframe for the negotiations as a whole;
 - the negotiating process would be conducted by reference to an agreed indicative timeframe, with the aim of reaching a conclusion within a definite period.
7. The need for mutual reassurance suggests that progress would have to be made within each of these groups of issues, and between them, in parallel.