

I talked to John Major about the talks in the last few days. We both agree on their importance and on the need for them to make more rapid progress when they resume at the beginning of June. Obviously we will both be thinking about how we can help the process forward in the period between now and then. One of the key problems is to reach agreement on how decommissioning is to be dealt with. Both governments agree that this should be on the basis of the Mitchell Report, but we and the parties need to do some more thinking about how agreement about this can be reached between all the parties.

Another issue is how to inject greater urgency into the talks. I have said before that it might be helpful to propose some kind of an indicative timeframe to the talks participants. Again we will want to think more about this, with the British Government and the parties, in the period before the talks resume. And once the talks have started, we will no doubt want to review progress at a reasonably early stage, perhaps through a Summit, to discuss how the issues can best be taken forward.

(Participation in the talks) John Major and I are at one in calling for a genuinely unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire and for compliance, in actions as in words, with the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules for the talks. There is indeed a legal requirement on the British Government to invite Sinn Fein to participate in the talks if these requirements are met. For my part ...