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PRIV OFF STORMONT

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6 JULY 1997

**DRUMCREE**

Commenting on the decision made earlier today in respect of the Drumcree church parade by the Chief Constable under Article 4 of the Public Order Order 1987, the Rt Hon Dr Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

"This is a sad day for all of us. Many will be angered by what has occurred but I appeal to them and to all with influence in their communities to exercise restraint. Northern Ireland has seen far too many tragedies. Peace and the preservation of life in the end matters most of all.

The right to peaceful assembly - the right to march - is a basic right. But all rights carry responsibilities. They should be exercised with respect for the rights and freedoms of others.

In this case a decision has had to be taken to preserve public safety. I fully support the action the Chief Constable has had to take but at the same time this is an outcome which neither he nor I wanted.

What we and the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland wanted was a sensible accommodation. I have done my utmost to achieve that as has the Chief Constable. But where there is intransigence on both sides that becomes impossible. And that is what I have met.

Let me be quite clear. My approach involves setting up new and better arrangements for dealing with these disputes for future years. I very much regret that the previous Government did not take the opportunity it had to put in place improved arrangements for this summer.

We will bring forward new legislation on parades later this year. Most people accept that the current way of dealing with these disputes is not adequate. The independent report from Dr North and his colleagues will provide the basis for our new approach.

The judgement of the Chief Constable was that the public safety of all people in Northern Ireland is better protected by this decision. I respect and support his judgement. The law must be upheld but I want to make clear that the way ahead for the future is a new arrangement designed to ensure that the pain of these events can be put behind us for good.

I know many in the Nationalist community will be angered by this decision. It has been dictated by circumstances. I would have preferred it otherwise. Nevertheless I appeal to all in the Nationalist community to understand that overall public safety across Northern Ireland has to be the Chief Constable's main concern. Your voice



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is not ignored. I understand your feelings and I will address them in legislating on this issue. I am only sorry that option was not open to me this summer."

The full text of the statement issued by the Secretary of State is attached.