

ANNEX A

SPEAKING NOTE

General

- value this opportunity to meet today;
- grateful for the very great **personal commitment** which each of you have made and continue to make to the talks process.
- pleased that the talks will again benefit from your skilled and fair chairmanship;

New government/ Resumption of Talks

- Northern Ireland will continue to be a **high priority** for this government and for me personally. I had a very useful discussion with the President.
- want to see **early progress** onto issues of substance in the talks;
- this means injecting **new momentum** into the process and finding a way through on decommissioning as a matter of urgency. The 2 Governments are endeavouring to work up **joint proposals** for early submission to the parties.
- the **UUP** vote held up well in the general election and they won an extra seat. Hope this will give them **fresh confidence** in the talks.
- want to see **Sinn Fein** in the talks - on the same basis as the other participants;
- we have said that no party can have a veto on progress at the talks;
- **Loyalists**: concerned about recent attacks attributed to Loyalists - this will need to be handled carefully in the talks - importance of the government acting justly, and with principle.

Sinn Fein

- have authorised meetings between Sinn Fein and officials, subject to events on the ground;

- hope that this new initiative will result in them making themselves eligible to join the talks soon;
- if not, will have no hesitation in **moving ahead without them**: they cannot hold the democratic process to ransom;
- the President's personal involvement has been vital: will continue to work closely with the Administration to achieve the peaceful and honourable settlement which we all want to see;
- officials have reported some encouraging signs from their two meetings with Sinn Fein;
- they are negotiating hard on issues of interest to them, particularly the question of how soon they could enter talks after a ceasefire;
- in the event of an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire, and consistency of words and deeds, there would be **no unnecessary delay** to their entry to talks.

Decommissioning

- would like the **two governments together** to make an early attempt to break out of the decommissioning impasse and set a date for the launch of substantive negotiations;
- agreement between the two governments increases the pressure on the UUP to acquiesce;
- also need to give the UUP cover;
- would value any help you can give in moving this forward with the Irish and UUP;
- aware of Irish concerns but the reality is that unless both governments are committed to work to bring about decommissioning during the negotiations and to creating the mechanisms for this, the UUP will not engage;
- interested in your views on this and the other issues?