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RESPONSE TO MR TRIMBLE, Part 1

[Draft of 8 July]

## POSSIBLE CLARIFICATIONS OF THE AIDE MEMOIRE

### Sinn Féin participation [Trimble point 1]

1. Sinn Féin remains eligible to join the multi-party negotiations on the strength of the mandate it gained in the elections of 30 May 1996, but only if there has been an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire. The Government has made clear that the Secretary of State would take some 6 weeks to assess whether any declared IRA ceasefire was indeed unequivocal, borne out by words and deeds. That would indeed mean that for Sinn Féin to participate in the negotiations from 15 September there would need to be an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire by early August at the latest. However, the Government is determined that the multi-party negotiations should move on to the discussion of issues of substance no later than mid-September, whether or not Sinn Féin have by then been rendered eligible to participate. This will require the issue of decommissioning to be resolved to the satisfaction of the talks participants by the end of July: the two Governments' joint paper sets out their position on the issue and a series of "possible conclusions" which they believe could win general support.

### Quality of any ceasefire [Trimble point 2]

2. Both Governments have made clear that they are looking for an immediate and total end to violence, and would expect all participants to commit themselves to a similar objective.
3. It is, by definition, impossible to know whether any declared ceasefire will be "permanent" but the Government will be looking for evidence that any restoration of the IRA ceasefire is genuinely unequivocal and that the criteria set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Cmnd 3232 are fulfilled. It is for the British

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Government alone, applying the legal requirements, to issue the appropriate invitation to Sinn Féin; but, following the declaration of a ceasefire, the Government would want to consult with all parties as to the implications of it for the negotiations.

Process of entry [Trimble point 3]

4. Sinn Féin could not become a full participant in the multi-party negotiations until it had received a formal invitation to do so and had then formally - at a plenary meeting of the negotiations - affirmed its total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body. Pending a formal invitation, Sinn Féin would not be able to vote or participate in any formal sessions of the talks, whether in plenary or in any of the three strands or in any other format.
5. The Government does, however, propose that following a declaration of an IRA ceasefire Sinn Féin would be invited to meet officials and then Ministers. The Government would also propose to give Sinn Féin access to its offices at Castle Buildings and the opportunity to have [informal] meetings with the Independent Chairmen and with other participants if mutually desired. The overall purpose of these contacts would be to build confidence on both sides, that there was a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods by the Republican Movement and that an opportunity to participate in meaningful negotiations was genuinely on offer.

The Implications of IRA violence [Trimble point 10]

6. Both Governments are clear about the relationship between Sinn Féin and the IRA. That is reflected in the insistence on an IRA ceasefire as the necessary prerequisite to Sinn Féin's admission to the process. The commitment Sinn Féin would make to the six Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence will be seen in this light. The rules of course provide that any party

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which demonstrably dishonours those commitments will no longer be entitled to participate. Any resumption of IRA violence would bring this procedure into play.

Further negotiations with Sinn Féin [Trimble point 11]

7. The Government's position on the terms of Sinn Féin's entry to the negotiations was fully set out in the aide memoire sent to Sinn Féin on 13 June and published on 25 June. The Government remains anxious, however, that there should be no misunderstanding and is willing to respond to the requests for clarification of particular points in the aide memoire which have been sought by several of the participants in the negotiations and by Sinn Féin. There will be no negotiation on the points covered by the aide memoire and the need for clarification is very limited.

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