

05-SEP-1997 16:54 FROM TAOISEACH PRIVATE OFFICE TO

00441718399044 P.02/03

Tap - JEM

cc JP  
AC**Suggested wording**

The two Governments believe that it may be helpful to clarify their views on two crucial issues, consent and decommissioning, in the run-up to the resumption of all-party talks.

The two Governments remain fully committed to the consent principle as set out in the Downing Street Declaration, under which any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of its people, and this will be a guiding principle for them in the negotiations, from which no outcome is of course excluded or predetermined

The two Governments see the resolution of the decommissioning issue as an indispensable part of the process of negotiation, alongside other confidence building measures for all sides. That is why they have passed the appropriate legislation in their respective jurisdictions and agreed to establish an Independent Commission simultaneously with the launch of substantive negotiations. Security experts in both jurisdictions have made preparations to brief the Commission, so that options for draft schemes for decommissioning, in conformity with the Mitchell Report and the Independent Commission's terms of reference, are available for their consideration and their discussion with all the participants from 15 September.



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The two Governments remain totally committed to the implementation of the Mitchell Report in all its aspects. Successful decommissioning will depend on the co-operation of the paramilitary organisations themselves and cannot in practice be imposed on them as a precondition for successful negotiation or as an absolute obligation. But both Governments would like to see the decommissioning of some paramilitary arms during the negotiations, as progress is made in the political talks, and believe this could be a major contribution to confidence-building and momentum towards agreement. They look to all parties to negotiate in good faith on this compromise, as set out in the Mitchell Report.