

The two Governments are committed to the documents they have signed, including the Downing Street Declaration, but believe 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 consent principle, under which any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of its people, will be a guiding principle for them in the negotiations, from which no outcome is of course excluded or pre-determined.

Both Governments re-affirm that the aim of the negotiations is to achieve a new and lasting agreement, addressing the totality of relationships, which commands the consent of both Unionists and Nationalists. They recall that a guiding principle for the process of negotiations launched on 10 June 1996, enshrined in the agreed rules of procedure and therefore binding on all participants, is that any agreement in these negotiations must command sufficient consensus among the participants.