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Paper handed over by Sinn Féin at meeting with Mo Mowlam on 6/8.

PEACE IN IRELAND - AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Sinn Féin welcomes these discussions. Dialogue is the only way to peacefully resolve the many differences between us. We look forward to a positive engagement which we hope will move the peace process forward. Sinn Féin enters these discussions on the basis of our electoral mandate. This is a matter of democratic rights and not a privilege to be given or withheld. We welcome your recognition of this.

It is, of course, a matter of regret that the negative approach adopted by the previous British government delayed the search for an agreed and lasting peace settlement for a period of at least 3 years.

The great challenge which remains is to remove the causes of conflict by making real progress towards a lasting peace settlement.

Progress requires meaningful negotiations - a frank and genuine dialogue and a good faith engagement on all sides.

We believe the process of negotiations should be as transparent as possible so as to build public confidence in the process itself and to create a sense of public ownership.

Irish republicans want peace. Peace demands democracy, equality and justice. We want an end to conflict; an end to division; to poverty and inequality. We want an Ireland free and independent.

|| Sinn Féin enters negotiations as an Irish republican party seeking to promote the broad nationalist objective of an end to British rule in Ireland. Partition is wrong. It is a failure of the past which must be put right.

The British state in Ireland - the six county statelet - is the product of British policy. British policy has underpinned the climate for conflict and has prevented substantive change. The British government must accept its responsibility for this and, therefore, its responsibility for resolving the conflict. Historically British rule in Ireland has sustained a culture of discrimination, inequality and intolerance. The injustices which have resulted need to be speedily and effectively addressed. Peace requires that these be resolved.

In our view the issue of sovereignty, the claim of the British government to sovereignty in Ireland, is a key matter which must be addressed in negotiations. So too is the achievement through dialogue among the Irish people of an agreed Ireland. The objective political and historical evidence shows that political independence, a United Ireland, offers the best guarantee

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of equality and the most durable basis for peace and stability. An internal six county arrangement cannot work. There has to be fundamental constitutional and political change. The status quo is unworkable.

It is our view that the overwhelming majority of people throughout Ireland and Britain wish to see all parties participating in a meaningful and inclusive negotiations process.

Sinn Féin wants to see the Unionist parties at the negotiating table in September. We want Unionists there because peace in Ireland and a genuine peace settlement is best and most speedily achieved by unionists playing a full and active part in bringing that about. We urge the leaders of unionism to open their minds to the possibilities created by the new situation we are in. We are asking them to negotiate with us. Sinn Féin is not threatening the unionist's heritage or identity.

Unionists are an intrinsic part of Ireland. This is your home. Republicans don't want you to leave it nor do we wish to dominate you. You have a right and a responsibility with the rest of the Irish people to shape our shared future. We acknowledge our responsibility, as part of a reciprocal process, to try to convince unionists of our good intentions with regard to their future on this island. In a situation of deep division such as exists here, all of us have to suspend the distrust we harbour regarding the intentions of others. Let us listen to each other. Sinn Féin is prepared to do that. We urge others to do the same.

We have a vision of a new future of which we can all be proud, a pluralist society based on tolerance, fairness and equality, in which we all lose our fear of difference and cherish diversity. Let us all give the future a chance.

Sinn Féin's peace strategy is about bringing an end to all conflict, of setting behind us the divisions and inequalities which still haunt our country. We want to move forward into a new inclusive future. Notwithstanding the many obvious political differences between us, I am sure you will agree that dialogue offers us all the best hope of doing that. We will, therefore, approach these discussions and the wider negotiations process in a constructive, responsible and determined manner.

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1. We hope this dialogue will help create a healing process which removes the causes of conflict and addresses its consequences. Everyone shares the responsibility to bring about a real and lasting peace in Ireland. Republicans have demonstrated the will to face up to our responsibility in this. This is evident in the initiatives we have taken, both unilaterally and with others in Ireland, to advance the search for peace. The courageous initiative taken by the leadership of the Irish Republican Army, on July 20, in restoring its cessation of August 31, 1994, is most significant. We now have the opportunity to achieve a political settlement.

2. Our long-standing position has been one of willingness to enter into dialogue with a view to removing the causes of conflict. Democratic, political and practical imperatives clearly require the involvement of all political views if a democratic resolution is to be sought and achieved.

3. Inclusive and all embracing peace talks led by the two governments should, in our view, address three broad areas:

- (a) Political and constitutional change
- (b) An equality agenda
- (c) Demilitarisation.

3.1. Equality of treatment is an essential ingredient of any process of democratic negotiations. Sinn Féin endorses an approach, where all parties are subject to the same rules and procedures in an effective process of negotiations which aims to remove the causes of conflict.

3.2. The political climate in which these talks occur could be significantly improved if the British government acted positively and speedily to demilitarise the situation. An end to British Army/RUC operations and the speedy release of all political prisoners, for example, would generate confidence in and greatly assist the peace process.

3.3. The British government should also outline a programmatic approach on issues of equality. Parity of esteem and equality of treatment must be realised. The imbalance in the unemployment ratio needs to be redressed and effective provision for equality of opportunity in employment realised. Equality in economic development and greater and more equally shared prosperity are required. The Irish language and culture need equality of treatment. In other words there needs to be equality in all sectors of society - in social, economic, cultural, justice, democratic and national rights issues.

3.4. These issues do not require negotiation. They are issues of basic civil and human rights. The British government should act on these issues immediately to demonstrate a real interest in building confidence in its approach to the search for a lasting peace.

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4. The route to peace in Ireland is to be found in the restoration to the Irish people as a whole of our right to national self-determination. National self-determination is universally accepted to mean a nation's right to exercise the political freedom to determine its own social, economic and cultural development without external influence or impediment and without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity. Agreement on how that right is to be exercised is a matter for the Irish people alone to determine.

5. British sovereignty over the six-counties, as with all of Ireland before partition, is self-evidently the root cause of division, political instability and conflict.

6. Consequently, and with due regard for the real difficulties involved, our objective is to bring about a change of British government policy in regards to this and an end to British jurisdiction on this island. This should, of course, be accomplished in the shortest possible time consistent with obtaining maximum consent to the process.

7. We believe that the wish of the majority of the people of Ireland is for Irish unity. We believe that an adherence to democratic principles makes Irish unity inevitable. The emerging political and economic imperatives both within Ireland and within the broader context of greater European political union support the logic of Irish unity. Since its creation in 1921, the six-county statelet has been in constant crisis. Its survival has always been dependant on division, repressive legislation, coercion and discrimination. Its existence lies at the heart of the present conflict and divisions, both in Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland. The conflict is a political problem not a security problem. It requires a political solution.

8. It is our view therefore that the British Government should play a crucial and constructive role in persuading unionists to reach a democratic agreement on the issue of Irish national reunification with the rest of the people of this island and to encourage, facilitate and enable such agreement.

9. No-one can have a veto over the negotiations or over their outcome. If they are to be successful, inclusive negotiations must address all relevant issues without vetoes, without pre-conditions and without any attempt to pre-determine the out-come.

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10. We recognise that the concerns of the unionist population about their position in an Irish national democracy must be addressed and resolved in a concrete way, including legislation for all measures agreed in the course of a process of negotiations. This process of national reconciliation must secure the political, religious and democratic rights of the northern unionist population. That is not only the democratic norm but a practical necessity if we are to advance the cause of peace in Ireland.

11. The most urgent issue facing the people of Ireland and Britain is the need for a genuine peace process which sets democratic equality, justice and political stability as its objectives and, has as its means, dialogue and all-embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles. We are convinced that if the political will exists then we can finally move away from conflict through the achievement of a democratic political settlement. The potentially historic opportunity which currently exists should be enthusiastically grasped by all sides.

6 August 1997