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**CONFIDENTIAL****Annex A****DRAFT JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ, 29 JULY**

1. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland reviewed progress to date in the multi-party talks and reiterated their commitment to start substantive political negotiations on 15 September.
2. They welcomed the restoration of the IRA ceasefire and urged those concerned to demonstrate by their words and actions that it was genuinely unequivocal. They expressed their desire to see the negotiations move forward on a fully inclusive basis, with all participants committed to exclusively peaceful methods and to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body.
3. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State launched a programme of activity to prepare the way for substantive political negotiations to begin on 15 September. They confirmed their intention to engage in widespread consultations with the other talks participants in the period before the next plenary, on 9 September.
4. In particular, they decided to:
  - consult with the Independent Chairmen and with the other parties on how best to complete the agenda for the remainder of the opening plenary on 9 September;
  - liaise with the Independent Chairmen and with the other participants to make all the necessary practical preparations for the effective conduct of the substantive negotiations.
5. In order to advance work and make the maximum use of the opportunities available, the two Governments invited the other participants to:

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- reflect further on the issues which need to be dealt with in the negotiations and on recent developments relevant to the negotiations and to undertake whatever consultations they feel necessary;
  - meet them in whatever format is mutually convenient, to discuss how best to complete the agenda for the remainder of the opening plenary and how the substantive negotiations might most effectively be conducted;
  - make their own preparations for the launch of substantive negotiations, including through preliminary discussions with other participants where mutually helpful.
6. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State noted that the proposals on decommissioning tabled by the two Governments on 25 June had failed to secure sufficient consensus support in the talks on 23 July. They reaffirmed the two Governments' judgement that the best and only realistic way forward lies in implementing all aspects of the report of the International Body. They confirmed their commitment to the two Governments' proposals and their intention to work to build wider support for them, including by responding to any requests to clarify points which remain genuinely unclear.
7. Meanwhile, in the light of their commitment to implement all aspects of the report of the International Body, they decided to make all necessary preparations to establish an Independent Commission on the basis envisaged in the two Governments' proposals of 25 June (as amplified on 16 July), in time for that Commission to consult relevant security experts in both jurisdictions and formulate options for draft schemes for decommissioning, in conformity with the report of the International Body and its own terms of reference, which may be available for discussion with all the participants in the talks from 15 September.

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8. The two Governments also announced that they had invited General John de Chastelain to serve as Chairman-designate of the Independent Commission. They invited the other participants in the multi-party talks to make themselves available for consultation with the two Governments on the membership and terms of reference of the Independent Commission.

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