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 NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

6 August 1997

MEETING WITH SINN FEIN, 6 AUGUST 1997

The Secretary of State, Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, and Political Affairs Minister, Mr Paul Murphy MP, today met a delegation from Sinn Fein at Stormont.

Speaking after the meeting the Secretary of State said that she had been able to invite Sinn Fein to meet her because of the IRA ceasefire. She hoped circumstances would enable further meetings to take place.

"I took the opportunity to tell Sinn Fein face-to-face that I was pleased that the IRA had declared a ceasefire. I expressed the hope that it would be reflected in words and deeds so that Sinn Fein could join the Talks process.

"I stressed that Government is anxious to see a genuinely inclusive talks process and that in the light of events on the ground I will assess the situation at the end of the month and decide if circumstances enable me to invite Sinn Fein to talks on 9 September, in advance of the start of substantive negotiations on 15 September. I hope that will be the case.

We discussed a wide range of issues including prisoners, parades, equality of treatment, security and other confidence building measures. I confirmed that the Government remains committed to the joint paper on decommissioning and urged Sinn Fein to work to achieve the earliest possible decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons. I also encouraged the delegation to use all its influence to build community confidence in every way possible.

"I stressed that the talks will be taken forward on 15 September on the basis of adherence to the Mitchell principles and that this was the only realistic way ahead. We are totally committed to the principle of consent, fairness, justice and equality of treatment for all the people of Northern Ireland."

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