

31. Jul. 1997 17:27

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 7638 P. 11/12

Joint Communiqué, 29 July 1997

1. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Mo Mowlam, MP, accompanied by the Minister for Political Development, Mr Paul Murphy, MP, and the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ray Burke, TD, accompanied by the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Liz O'Donnell, TD, 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 cease-fire which, confirmed in word and deed, would open the way to inclusive talks. 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 Secretary of State and the Minister for Foreign Affairs 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 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:
 - 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.

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No. 7638 P. 12/12

6. The Secretary of State and the Minister for Foreign Affairs noted that the proposals on decommissioning tabled by the two Governments on 25 June, as clarified on 16 July, 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 in the context of meaningful and inclusive political negotiations. They confirmed their commitment to the two Governments' proposals and their intention to work to build wider support for them in further dialogue with the parties.
7. In order to ensure that the mechanisms on decommissioning are capable of being launched simultaneously with substantive negotiations, as envisaged in the agenda of the opening Plenary, they have decided to complete the work needed for the signature of the International Agreement and other preparations for the establishment of an Independent Commission, so that the latter could be in a position to commence work on a full operational basis, on the lines set out in the Governments' joint note to the Plenary of 16 July, alongside the start of substantive negotiations on 15 September.