

7. Jan. 1998 12:34

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No. 0887 P. 1/2

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Date : 7 / 1 / 98

Number of Pages : 1+1

**Classification** : Unclassified / Restricted / Confidential  
Secret / Top Secret / Other (please state)

Message :

SOS + Jem

As discussed earlier this morning,  
attached is a Proposed statement  
(or draft form of words which may  
be used in briefing) <sup>for</sup> after the meetings  
with the P.M.

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**NORTHERN IRELAND**

1. The Prime Minister today met the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Mo Mowlam, and the Ministers of State at the Northern Ireland Office, Mr Paul Murphy and Mr Adam Ingram, to review the situation in Northern Ireland in advance of the resumption of the multi party negotiations on 12 January.
2. They agreed that the best way to strengthen public confidence in Northern Ireland would be to achieve real progress in the negotiations towards a comprehensive political settlement which could command widespread support on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland.
3. The Prime Minister and Secretary of State rededicated themselves to facilitating such progress and to working closely with the Irish Government and with all the parties to that end.
4. The Government has long taken the view that the necessary detailed negotiations within the talks process would be more effectively focused if there were a general understanding of the broad parameters of any agreement likely to emerge from the talks. It has sought to explore the prospects for achieving such an understanding in discussions with all the other participants, both bilaterally and in various rounds of discussions at Castle Buildings. Those efforts will continue with renewed vigour.
5. Meanwhile, the Government, in consultation with the Irish Government in respect of Strand 2, will be proposing issues for discussion in the meetings of Strand 1 and Strand 2 which are due to take place next week.
6. The Government is committed to building confidence throughout the community in Northern Ireland. It will govern with fairness, but not favours to either side of the community.
7. The clearest boost to confidence will come through agreement in the talks process. Other confidence-building measures are also for discussion in the process, primarily in the two Liaison Sub Committees established for that purpose. The Government recognises the particular sensitivities of prisoner issues on all sides. They too need to be resolved, alongside progress on all the other issues, to the satisfaction of the participants in the process. The Government will table a paper on prisoner issues at next Tuesday's planned meeting of the Liaison Sub Committee on Confidence Building Measures.