

DRAFT STATEMENT

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## NORTHERN IRELAND

In view of the press speculation and misleading comments from various quarters, the Government wishes to make clear its position on recent contacts with John Hume and on the possibility of a new IRA ceasefire.

Mr. Hume has suggested over the last few months that a new IRA ceasefire, which would this time be permanent, is available if the Government clarifies its position on various issues, including the nature of the Belfast talks, decommissioning and possible future confidence-building measures. The Government have consistently made clear that we would welcome a new ceasefire but that we are sceptical about how credible it could or would be, in the light of continuing IRA attacks and evidence of their intentions. We have also said from the start that there could be no question of changing our policy to achieve a new ceasefire, which should be declared without further prevarication. However, we were prepared to repeat existing policy if it was unclear in any way and if repeating it would help to bring about a new ceasefire.

We therefore gave Mr. Hume the terms of a possible statement. He suggested different words. We were unable to agree. The last text he gave us was on 10 October. This amounted to more than a restatement of existing policy. We could not accept it. We therefore passed to him a further text on 23 November, which included our views on what would need to follow a new IRA ceasefire before Sinn Fein could be invited to join the talks.

This text is attached. It is a fair, balanced and reasonable statement of British Government policy. It makes clear that Sinn Fein's eligibility to join the talks following a ceasefire depends entirely on what is said and done by themselves

and the IRA. If the IRA and Sinn Fein are genuine about their desire for peace, there is absolutely nothing standing in the way of a new ceasefire. We call on them to declare one as soon as possible and to make clear that this time it will be for real and for good.

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