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JOINT STATEMENT BY THE TAOISEACH MR. BERTIE AHERN, T.D.,
THE LEADER OF THE SDLP, MR. JOHN HUME, M.P, M.E.P., AND THE
LEADER OF SINN FÉIN, MR. GERRY ADAMS, M.P.

39,24

We are all committed to the achievement of lasting peace and reconciliation on this island based on justice and equality.

All-party engagement in inclusive political dialogue at this time is needed for the purpose of achieving agreement between all sections of the Irish people. We reiterate that we are totally and absolutely committed to exclusively democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems. We recognise that ultimately we can resolve this problem only with the participation and agreement of the Unionist people.

All three of us endorse the principles set out in the Report of the New Ireland Forum and those that were agreed in the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The challenge is to find the structures that will protect and accommodate the equal rights and identities of both Unionists and Nationalists, and that can obtain the consent and allegiance of all.

We look forward to the opening of substantive all-party negotiations on 15 September. We have agreed to strengthen opportunities for consultation between the Irish Government and parties to the talks.

25 July 1997.