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**Transcript of Press Conference
with Martin McGuinness and An Taoiseach
Friday 9th October 1998**

An Taoiseach

As you know we've been talking with the last two and a half hours or so with Sinn Fein and as always its good for us to have an exchange of views with Sinn Fein. I think you also know I had a discussion with their chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness at the outset of the meeting just when we were going through things before we went through the longer list and I think the view that we have is, that I was reiterating it this morning to Sinn Fein that the Irish and British Governments are absolutely determined to move on with all aspects of the agreement. We've had some delays, we've had some difficulties but our determination to move on and to see everything move together is as solid as it ever was. We noted this morning that tomorrow it will be six months since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and we've made much progress. We've had, I think, an awful lot of successes over the last six months but there are some frustrations as well and we are very anxious to see the setting up of the Shadow Executive. It should've been set up by now but we want to see that happen. We particularly want to see that followed quickly by the North/South Ministerial Body. We've continued to work on the detail of that and I'm glad to say since my meeting here a few weeks ago with Mr Trimble that the detail and the technical aspects of the implementation bodies, North/South bodies we have moved ahead a pace and we've much useful work and we're also doing that with Sinn Fein so that we will be ready to move in to this very important part of the Agreement as soon as we can. We, this morning as well, reviewed and discussed the difficulties that the Unionists Party have of getting on with the Shadow Executive, particularly Mr Trimble's difficulties and because of the decommissioning issue. It is fair to say that the conclusion of our discussions this morning (tape blank)

..... that progress in that area is happening as per the terms of the Agreement. It's for Martin to talk about his meetings but I'm aware of them. I'm aware fairly well of at least most of the content of them. And I believe that General de Chastelain, as the Agreement had foreseen, is the resolution of this particular

issue. While that is happening under the terms of the Agreement all of the other issues in all their aspects, and we went through them at great length this morning. The equality and the human rights issues that they ought also have to move a pace but I am happy at the conclusion of this morning's meeting that we are making, as per the terms of the Agreement, and that's what we were reviewing and we are making the necessary progress.

Martin McGuinness

Thank you Taoiseach. Well we had a fairly lengthy meeting this morning as the Taoiseach has outlined we met on our own for a period. It was very positive, very constructive, very realistic meeting. A good meeting as all our meetings are with the Irish Government have been. We obviously are very deeply appreciative of the ongoing efforts of the Irish Government to see the implementation in full of the Good Friday Agreement. We obviously from Sinn Fein's prospective are concerned to see that that Agreement is implemented because we have been through effectively two referendums in the course in recent months there is a democratic imperative on all of us to ensure that that Agreement is implemented. That essentially means we do need to see the structures up and running. We need people on the ground to see that there has been established a Shadow Executive. That we are going to have a North South Ministerial Council. That there will be implementation bodies, are up and running and that there is going to be dealt with in the context of the Agreement the wide ranging justice and equality issues which many of our people are looking to see addressed. Also of course the issue of the creation of a new policing service. There is an impasse at the moment and we are very conscious of that. We in Sinn Fein are aware that there are rejectionist unionists out there and I think there has been a manifestation of that today in the North who are looking to destroy the Agreement. These are people who, I think, are using the decommissioning issue, but effectively themselves are opposed lock, stock and barrell to agreementation of the Good Friday Agreement. I don't believe that these people can allowed to succeed and I think there is an onus of responsibility on all those who canvassed for and voted for the yes vote in the Referendum to stand together against the rejectionists who tried to destroy all of the work that we've been involved in over the course of the last five or six years. I am quite confident that they will not succeed but it will take the best efforts of all of those who are in favour of the agreement including Mr Trimble to ensure that we move on decisively to implement that Agreement. As the Taoiseach has said in my capacity, as Sinn Fein's Chief Negotiator, have been working, I believe in good faith and constructively with the Head of the Decommissioning Body, John de Chastelain. From our perspective, we obviously want to overcome whatever impasse is there. We

believe that the decommissioning section of the Agreement adequately deals with the type of strategy which is required to move us into a scenario where we can overcome all the causes of conflict which exist in the North and to a situation where we can take all of the guns, British and Irish out of Irish politics. Our task obviously as always is a difficult one but we will stick at it. We know that there is tremendous support for all of us amongst the people of Ireland. We know that Unionists and Nationalists together voted for the Agreement and that spirit is still out there, I think that we are all very conscious that people are willing us on to press forward, to overcome the obstacles, to overcome the difficulties. And I think all of us who are in favour of the Agreement should be seeking at all times to ensure that we don't erect unnecessary obstacles to a process which badly needs to be implemented in full. So basically that's it Sin e. Go raibh maith agat.

Una Claffey

Could I ask you last week it was said in the Dail that it would be helpful if Sinn Fein were to address the declaration ?? say in support of the Good Friday Agreement. It also appeared after your meeting with John Hume last week explosives. Did you put that point to Mr McGuinness this morning ?

An Taoiseach

Well I think I put every question to Martin McGuinness this morning and I think he put many questions to me as well. In terms of where we're at and in terms of how I think all of these issues can be dealt with including the two that you put. We concluded this morning that the moves that have taken place in recent weeks and I think that in some ways if I can just emphasise it very strongly it should not be discounted the usefulness or the depth of engagement of discussions on this particular issue that are happening between the General de Chastelain and Martin McGuinness. I think people perhaps do not fully understand how this process is working. It is the first time in the Good Friday Agreement that we've had to get into finding a mechanism of dealing with the issue and what is happening now is that Martin McGuinness as Chief Negotiator of Sinn Fein is directly dealing and negotiating and discussing exactly as set out in the Agreement, to review, to observe, to implement all of these actions. It is in the terms of the Agreement that that has to happen and as far as I am concerned I haven't gone into this a great deal this morning and other discussions that I've had earlier on in the week with the British Prime Minister and others, this is now happening..

Journalist

Mr McGuinness could I just follow up on that. Do I take it that from what the Taoiseach has said that you are now engaged in a detailed negotiations with General John de ChastelainChaslen on precisely how to implement decommissioning?

Martin McGuinness

Well obviously I am not going to go into detail of the discussions which I am having on an ongoing basis with General de Chastelain but in the decommissioning section of the Good Friday Agreement, it commits all of the participants to use whatever influence they may have, to work in good faith and constructively with General de Chastelain to bring about decommissioning of arms. From our perspective in Sinn Fein, we have worked, I believe in good faith and constructively. I do think it's a serious mistake for people to elevate the decommissioning issue above all other aspects of the Agreement. I think that you know in the North of Ireland where I come from many people within Nationalist areas are very concerned that we're seeing a very determined attempt being made by rejectionist Unionists to destroy the Good Friday Agreement, lock, stock and barrell. That they are effectively using this issue, but its only one issue of many within the Agreement to which they opposed to undermine the Agreement. My commitment is to the implementation of the Agreement. People, you know, obviously ask the question, is Sinn Fein committed to the Good Friday Agreement. I state here today, without fear of contradiction, that Sinn Fein is unequivocally in support of the Good Friday Agreement. We were the people who were the initiators of this process along with John Hume, along with Albert Reynolds at that time and we've had the good fortune of being able to work right through to the present moment with a Taoiseach who's as well tuned in to how we resolve conflict on this island as any Taoiseach I've ever met in my life. We have to continue with that work. There are difficulties, there are problems out there. I think they are all over come-able but I think at the same time people need to appreciate that in the course of recent months, we in Sinn Fein have faced the issue of Mr Trimble's difficulty and Gerry Adams issued a very major statement from our perspective which I think addressed many of his difficulties. The announcement that I would deal with the decommissioning body on behalf of Sinn Fein was also a major move by Sinn Fein. We didn't have to do any of that. The terms of the Good Friday Agreement didn't make it incumbent upon us to that but we did that because we wanted to move to address an outstanding difficulty that some of our opponents had. Now there is a perception, I have to say, within Nationalists areas that those initiatives which were taken by Sinn Fein have been thrown back in our faces. And that's not on, that's not in the spirit of

conflict resolution as we have tried to work at over the course of recent years on this island. So I will continue my work on behalf of Sinn Fein with General de Chastlain. Its not useful to go into the detail of any of that but I am quite satisfied that all of the participants to the Good Friday Agreement maybe with the exception of some sections of Unionism are quite happy about Sinn Fein's commitment to this process, are quite happy that we are acting in good faith and constructively on this aspect of the agreement. But lets face reality here folks primarily what we need to see is the implementation in its fullest of the Good Friday Agreement we all negotiated six months ago. You know the hopes and expectations of all our people are riding on this Agreement. We are aware that there is a tremendous support out there. The people endorsed the Agreement in overwhelming numbers so there is a democratic imperative upon all of us to ensure that that Agreement is implemented to the full and certainly from our perspective in Sinn Fein, we are not going to allow those people within Unionism who tried to destroy the Agreement to have their way. I believe that inspite of their best efforts they will not fail.

Journalist

Are you satisfied that the two Governments and particularly the Irish Government are committed to putting

Michael McGuinness

Well I have always been satisfied with the workrate of the Irish Government and I think that the Irish Government are as anxious as we are and anybody who has a goodwill towards the process to see the fullest implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. I think there is no question or doubt about that. I do think that there is a particular responsibility on the British Govenment to address Mr Trimble and to make it clear to Mr Trimble that we must move on decisively to implement the Agreement that all of our pepole voted for. I do have to say that the British Government, I've met with Mo Mowlan in the course of recent days and I think she too and Tony Blair are anxious also to see the implemntation of this Agreement. So there is a lot of good will around. I think the people do understand that there are problems and difficulties out there. We have to overcome them and I think we are all committed to doing that.

Journalist

lead you to believe that a formula is on the way to overcome

An Taoiseach

I had a very useful one to one meeting this morning with Martin McGuinness and I think followed on, as I said to the earlier discussions of how this matter can be moved onto and again to reiterate that we have to do??...(tape blank)

ENDS