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Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

28 October, 1998.

Secret

Mr Paddy Teahon,
Secretary,
Department of the Taoiseach,
Government Buildings,
Dublin 2.

Dear Paddy,

I attach a first attempt at a joint statement, which is of course without commitment or prejudice on anyone's part. My interlocutor has asked that we not approach JH till they have had an opportunity to consider it. I would welcome any initial views, before I do any further sounding out. I would be grateful if you could send back any observations if possible by 4.30 this afternoon.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Martin Mansergh,
Special Advisor to the Taoiseach.



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2

DUBLIN 2

SECRET

28 October 1998

Dr Martin Mansergh
Special Adviser to the Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Dublin 2

Dear Martin

Thank you for the draft statement you sent across earlier this afternoon.

While we must maintain the momentum of the implementation of the Agreement across the board, and in particular develop a context in which the present impasse on decommissioning and the formation of the institutions can be overcome, I have doubts about whether it would be wise to contemplate a statement of the type envisaged at this time.

First, it seems to me that it would be likely, in a dramatic way, to convey a sense of crisis. At the same time, I very much doubt if it would encourage unionist movement - rather, while I acknowledge it does genuinely try to offer assurances, I would fear that its timing and substance might only harden attitudes and so seriously widen the rift on the decommissioning issue.

Secondly, it differs considerably from what the Taoiseach has been saying in public in recent times, including last week in the Dáil, and would therefore be likely to expose him to political and media charges of inconsistency.

Thirdly, it could lead to a risk of a breach with the British Government, which I cannot see as being able to associate itself with or support a paper of this kind.

Fourthly, it could place Séamus Mallon in a quite difficult situation.

I would argue that it would be preferable to maintain a two-track approach:-

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- (a) making the maximum possible substantive progress on the Northern Ireland Departments and, very importantly, the North/South bodies through the Trimble/Mallon round-table talks. This would then be further developed through a meeting between the Northern side and the Government, thereby helping to build nationalist confidence, especially through demonstrating that key parts of the Agreement for them are being moved ahead in a substantive way;
- (b) continuing to explore privately just what the Sinn Féin bottom line on decommissioning might be. Specifically, as I mentioned in the paper I sent across last week, I continue to believe that we need to discuss with Sinn Féin, privately and frankly, exactly what scenario they envisage for exercising their influence on this issue; until we know this, it will be next to impossible for us to try and deliver what is required.

Yours sincerely

Dermot Gallagher
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

cc: Mr. P. Teahon
Mr. T. Dalton

39, 25A

Non-Paper

Draft Statement by the Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern,

Mr John Hume, Leader of the SDLP, and

Mr Gerry Adams, Leader of Sinn Féin

When we signed the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, we, like others, pledged ourselves and our parties to its full implementation in all its aspects keeping to the timescales set out in the text. It is incumbent on every party to fulfil their obligations, so as to allow the Agreement to proceed as intended and as far as possible on schedule. We acknowledge much valuable and ongoing work that has been done in the Assembly and by the two Governments in that regard. We also freely acknowledge positive contributions by the Ulster Unionist Party to furthering peace in undoubtedly difficult circumstances. It is not possible to make the Agreement work without their participation and except on an inclusive basis.

The Agreement ratified by a large majority of the people North and South and by the two Parliaments requires to be implemented, if it is to fulfil its potential as a peace settlement. It represents the peaceful political alternative to a

longstanding conflict, and provides a framework that can be supported by every democrat with a good conscience.

We are seriously concerned that implementation of the Good Friday Agreement with regard to interlocking institutional arrangements has not taken place in the timescale we would have wished and that was envisaged following its endorsement by the people North and South.

It is clear that political development and development in relation to decommissioning have, we believe unfortunately, become linked, the latter being a separate issue from the pledge of office. It is our judgement that only through clear understandings on all sides on what needs to be achieved in all these areas over the period of the Agreement will the implementation process be unblocked.

As democrats we recognise and share the concern and determination, not by any means confined to the people of the Unionist tradition, that legitimate political differences in future shall be accommodated by exclusively peaceful means within the framework of the Agreement. This requires removal of the gun from Irish politics, and an absolute guarantee that weapons will not be used

again by any organisation that accepts the verdict of the people as expressed in the two Referendums on the Good Friday Agreement. The means by which total disarmament is achieved within the two year period will be monitored, reviewed and verified by the Independent Commission, which will report from time to time to the two Governments. The matter should clearly be left in their hands. The Agreement itself contains many protections for the integrity of the democratic process.

In the meantime, we as leaders representing the Irish people and as a means of building the confidence that will facilitate full implementation of the Agreement, pledge our solemn faith to those of the Unionist tradition and others, to oppose with all our strength any resumption of violence in any shape or form from whatever quarter, to strive for a universal cessation of all armed actions, and to ensure as far as lies within our power that weapons of war are never used again in Ireland.

It is clear to all of us that future relationships on this island, indeed the stability of the Good Friday Agreement itself, depend on the reciprocal good faith of all the participants. Given those conditions, we are convinced that within the time-scale provided, the goals set out in the chapter on decommissioning can

and will be achieved. We believe the two Governments must now work with the relevant parties and the Independent Decommissioning Body so that they can arrive at the understandings necessary.

We believe, and are prepared to recommend, in addition to formal commitments contained in the Agreement, reciprocal confidence-building gestures by all the participants, which have to be voluntary to be of value, but which could be farsighted and courageous, and have an important part to play. But their absence or impossibility at this time must not hold up implementation of the Agreement.

The achievement and consolidation of peace, stability and reconciliation, a new quality of justice, the development of a new depth to the totality of relationships, and prospects of economic reconstruction all follow from the implementation of the Agreement as a whole, not just one element of it. It is important that the good faith of any of the participants in honouring their obligations should not be open to question. Accordingly, we look forward to taking with others at the first opportunity the decision to proceed with the Agreement as planned, so as to provide the context for all the other progress to which every party and section of the community attach importance.