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The following statement has been issued by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Taoiseach:

The Government are deeply concerned that the suffering of the people of Northern Ireland be brought to an end and peace, reconciliation and justice secured. They recognise that the Irish Government have an important role in helping to find a just solution to the great human and political problems which face the people of the North.

Conscious of their responsibilities the Government are giving earnest consideration to the matters covered by the White Paper "Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals". They accept that there is no quick or easy solution to the many problems of Northern Ireland, but see in the White Paper proposals which could help towards a solution.

The Government are glad to note that the White Paper proposes a system of power-sharing under which an Assembly will be elected at an early date by proportional representation and an Executive will be appointed on an acceptable basis reached in discussion with elected representatives. These proposals will, however, require further clarification.

The Government note constructive elements such as the proposals to guarantee human rights and to establish an agency to prevent discrimination, including employment discrimination in the private sector as well as in the public sector.

The Government note with some regret that it has not been found desirable at this stage to outline in greater detail the proposals for a Council of Ireland but, in the belief that the terms of the White Paper leave open the negotiation of an effective bipartite

Council of Ireland, they are ready to enter into discussions with all the parties concerned.

This is a time for calm and restraint on all sides to allow for a full exploration of the proposals and of all their implications.

20 Márta, 1973.