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Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

FRIENDS OF IRELAND ST. PATRICK DAY'S STATEMENT March 17, 1987

As Friends of Ireland in the United States Congress, we join today with Irish Americans everywhere to honor Ireland, to celebrate the past year's progress toward peace in Northern Ireland, and to commit ourselves to building on this progress in the future.

1986 witnesses the first anniversary of the historic Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed on November 15, 1985, which established a framework for reconciliation between the Nationalist and Unionist communities in Northern Ireland. We regard the Agreement as the best hope to end the long and bitter conflict that has wracked the province and taken over 2,500 lives in the past eighteen years.

We congratulate the new Taoiseach, Charles J. Haughey, on his election by the Dail last week, and we look forward to working once again with his government to achieve peace and stability in Northern Ireland. We also commend the outgoing Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain, for their skillful statesmanship in negotiating the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

We applaud all those in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Great Britain, who have worked hard to achieve and maintain the Agreement. It provides an unprecedented but realistic role for the Irish government in representing the interests of the Nationalist community in the North, influencing the day-to-day affairs of Northern Ireland, and reducing tensions between the two communities.

We also commend the establishment under the Agreement of a framework to address the complex causes and festering problems at the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict. The Joint Secretariat, established in Belfast and composed of Irish and British officials, serves as a daily avenue for both routine and "hot-line" communications between the two governments on matters affecting Northern Ireland.

An Intergovernmental Conference, chaired jointly by the Irish Foreign Minister and the British Secretary of State, has also been established under the Agreement to consider specific grievances of the two communities in Northern Ireland.

In the sixteen months since the Agreement was signed, thirteen meetings of the Conference have been held at the ministerial level to consider essential issues such as relations between the Northern Ireland

security forces and the Nationalist community, a code of conduct for the police and a police complaints procedure, a more balanced representation within the Judiciary, permission for the Nationalist community to display Irish flags and emblems, a proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, equality of opportunity in employment, voting rights, cross-border security cooperation, and a range of economic, social, and cultural issues.

We believe the United States can and should continue to play an effective role in facilitating a peaceful solution in Northern Ireland that respects the human rights of all citizens and recognizes the legitimate aspirations of both the Nationalist and Unionist communities.

Those who use violence to achieve political change or to preserve the status quo and those who dishonor the rule of law deserve no support. Those who resort to the bomb and the bullet are no friends of Ireland. Their tactics will not succeed, because violence and terrorism are not the answer to the crisis in Northern Ireland. We renew our unequivocal condemnation of those in Ireland and Northern Ireland--and in the United States--who condone, support, advocate or engage in violence in any form, by words, or deeds, or dollars. We deplore terrorist acts in Northern Ireland on both sides. We continue to believe that the most important contribution by the United States to peace in Northern Ireland is to make clear, in no uncertain terms, that men and women of violence have no support in the United States.

It is not enough, however, for the United States simply to speak against the violence. The Congress in 1986 authorized \$120 million over the next three years for the International Fund for Ireland, under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to promote reconstruction, development, and employment on a non-discriminatory basis in the areas of Ireland and Northern Ireland which have suffered most from conflict. \$85 million of this \$120 million aid authorization has already been appropriated; now, we must ensure that the remaining \$35 million is appropriated for the next fiscal year.

The Friends of Ireland deplore violence. We must act for peace. This was the premise of the first St. Patrick's Day statement issued ten years ago on March 17, 1977. We recall the commitment of President Carter to the search for peace when he said "...The people of Northern Ireland should know that they have our complete support in their quest for a peaceful and just society." We also commend as we have in the past this administration's strong backing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and its support for The International Fund For Ireland. All of us welcome President Reagan's deep personal interest in Ireland and his eloquent opposition to the violence and terror in Northern Ireland.

We are pleased that young Irish men and women continue to see the U.S. as a place of opportunity and learning as did so many of their forebears. Under last year's Immigration Reform Act this important opportunity was enhanced and remains available, and both our countries will continue to be the beneficiaries of this long and valued relationship.

Finally, we pledge ourselves once again to the great goal of Irish unity. We invite all who seek an end to the violence to join us in actively encouraging the process of reconciliation, peace, and justice. The foundation for a brighter future has been well laid in 1986. As Friends of Ireland, we intend to build upon it in 1987, so that true peace may finally come to this troubled corner of the world.

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