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Remarks By
Secretary of State Warren Christopher

White House Conference on Trade and Investment in Ireland
Sheraton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
May 25, 1995

Cardinal Daly, Reverend Dunlop, honored guests from the United Kingdom and Ireland, and distinguished representatives of American business, I am pleased to join you today at this important and hopeful event.

Northern Ireland now has an historic opportunity for lasting peace. The British and Irish governments, represented here today by Sir Patrick Mayhew and Dick Spring, have undertaken a bold effort to overcome the animosity and distrust fueled by years of violent sectarian clashes. Now a process of genuine reconciliation is taking hold. Bombs and bullets are giving way to ballots and business. And the world has seen again that even the most intractable conflicts can be subject to peaceful resolution.

President Clinton has pledged to support these courageous efforts by the British and Irish governments, and by the people of Northern Ireland, to build a durable peace. In Europe no less than the Middle East, this Administration believes that the United States must be willing to support those who take risks for peace. Our close bonds of history, culture and tradition with the United Kingdom and Ireland give us a unique role and responsibility in helping to achieve this goal.

We also believe that peace can endure only when it produces tangible benefits. Governments can make the peace. Governments can create the climate for economic growth. But only the private sector can marshal the resources necessary for sustained growth and development. Only the private sector can produce a peace that will endure.

That is why President Clinton appointed Senator George Mitchell as his Special Advisor on Economic Initiatives in Ireland. That is why he sent Commerce Secretary Ron Brown to Belfast last December to identify opportunities for new business links among our nations. That is why he has strongly supported the International Fund for Ireland. And that is why he has convened this Conference for Trade and Investment.

These initiatives will allow Americans to build on the strong business, trade, political and cultural ties that we already enjoy with Ireland, north and south. American companies in Northern Ireland and the border counties already enjoy major advantages: access to the entire EU, the largest integrated market in the world; a highly trained, flexible, and well-educated work force; and a tradition of hard work and fair play.

Our message to you is simple: A Northern Ireland at peace is a Northern Ireland that is ready for business. The people of Northern Ireland are demonstrating their willingness to settle their once bitter differences through dialogue and to build a better, more prosperous future. We stand ready to help. Working with the British and Irish governments, the United States will continue to help Northern Ireland attain the lasting and durable peace that has eluded it for so long.

Thank you very much.