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REMARKS BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES AT
ARMAGH, 7TH JULY 1994

I need hardly say what a great pleasure it is for me to come to Armagh, however briefly, for the first time and to see for myself such a special place in the story of Ireland. Down the centuries, Armagh has played a unique role at the spiritual centre of the story of Christianity in Ireland. For that reason it has been a particular delight this morning to meet both Archbishop Robin Eames and Cardinal Cahal Daly, here in Armagh, where the great cathedrals of their churches stand so close to one another. These cathedrals are a powerful symbol of the strength, spirit and hopes of people across Northern Ireland.

And, in that sense, I must emphasise that, every time I come to Northern Ireland, I am enormously heartened by the dignity and resilience of its people. Despite the immensely difficult times through which you have lived, the fabric of your society has not crumbled, but has shown an extraordinary strength. Your spirit as a people has not been brutalised by the suffering, the sorrow and the violence. You have not lost your courage, or your irrepressible conviction that answers can be found to heal the

divisions between communities. Throughout these years, I have been profoundly moved by the dignity and restraint of those victims of violence, and their relatives, who have been able to find it in their hearts, even from the depths of their own personal tragedies, to reject the natural temptation to meet violence with violence. And I can imagine their feelings so well when I recall my own at the time my great uncle, Lord Mountbatten, was so tragically killed. Despite all the events which have so often captured the headlines of a whole generation, and which we all grieve to see continuing in outrages on the Shankill Road, at Greysteel and Loughinisland - to mention only the most awful of the last twelve months - the overwhelming majority of people here have gone about their lives calmly and peacefully and, if it were not for terrorism, you would remain in Northern Ireland a more law-abiding society than probably anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not find it easy to explain how you have preserved these qualities in the midst of such troubles. But I am sure it is in large part testimony to the very real sense of community in Northern Ireland which, as I have seen for myself this morning very powerfully in Belfast, in the Townsend Street Centre and elsewhere, can provide a means of healing the divisions between people and creating the conditions for peace and prosperity. I attach a special importance to the

work of all those people who work within and across communities, for they - as I know from my own experience throughout the United Kingdom - help particularly to create the commitment and sense of purpose with which people can begin to tackle the social problems and turmoil around them which may otherwise seem insoluble. It is also working together at this level that can help create the trust between people which will be essential on that long and difficult road to peace in Northern Ireland which everyone desires. Most importantly, all these qualities which you have in abundance help send, I believe, a powerful message to that very small minority on both sides, the terrorists and the people of violence, and to those who play on and exploit the latent fears and prejudices of both communities, that terrorism will never prevail against the democratic freedoms of Northern Ireland, nor will violence ever be accepted as any measure of loyalty or faithfulness to the Crown or to the State.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is no exaggeration to say that, despite the background of the last 25 years, there is a considerable amount to celebrate in Northern Ireland. It is a beautiful land - even from a helicopter - and I long to see more of it. Great strides are being made to regenerate your cities. Communities are coming together and working together in the towns and villages in a most heartening way. Let us hope and pray that new grounds for optimism will slowly gather strength, and that it

will be possible to create a land, in the words of Louis MacNeice, "where life is a choice of instruments and none is debarred his natural music".

Part of this process is the recreation of pride - not the sinful and destructive pride which divides people, but that loving pride in one's community and surroundings which unites them. In that spirit, I was delighted to be asked to make two announcements to you today. The first is to tell you that The Queen has been graciously pleased to confer upon the town of Armagh the status of city, thus reinstating an honour which Armagh held from 1226 until a century and a half ago. The second is to announce that Her Majesty has also been pleased to confer the status of city on St Davids, in the Principality of Wales - part of the United Kingdom where I am sure some people will say I have been seen with alarming frequency over the last few days! This special distinction is being given to two towns which enjoy a long and important Christian heritage. Each also has a special Royal association, and each lost its status as city in the 19th century. Both towns - or cities as I can now call them - have a special place in our history books, and their restored status is richly deserved. Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot think of a more fitting way to help Armagh celebrate the 1,550th anniversary of your noble city, and I congratulate you all wholeheartedly.