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IRA CEASEFIRE: FURTHER IRISH REACTIONS

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SUMMARY

1. Taoiseach calls for three month ceasefire which could be made permanent and says that the time for Sinn Fein deliberation is over. Inter-party talks to take place on the setting up of forum for peace and reconciliation. Opposition leaders angry at Hume's criticism of them.

DETAIL

2. Speaking on his return from holiday on 9 April the Taoiseach said he was disappointed but not despairing of the future. 'The three-day ceasefire was much too short but the search for peace will go on.... The IRA can't keep deliberating forever. We need decisions and we need them fast. The three-day ceasefire was a very small step along the road to get peace. It would be good if we got a three month ceasefire and I would be hopeful we could then get a permanent ceasefire.' In a speech yesterday (10 April) Reynolds said that 'the time for debate and deliberation is over and the time for decision is here.'

3. The Taoiseach has also responded positively to the opposition leaders' request for inter-party talks on the setting up of the proposed forum for peace and reconciliation. While he refused to comment on Sinn Fein participation until the talks with the Opposition leaders had taken place, he said it would be possible for Sinn Fein to participate in the forum without accepting every aspect of the Downing Street Declaration, but only on condition that there was a permanent cessation of violence.

4. Meanwhile the three opposition leaders have reacted angrily to criticism by Hume that some members of their parties 'don't want the peace process to succeed.' In a joint statement they said their parties were 'firmly committed to

peace and genuine reconciliation as is shown by our constructive support for the Downing Street Declaration.''

COMMENT

5. The Taoiseach's comments in para 2 above may at first sight suggest some erosion of his commitment to a permanent renunciation of violence as opposed to a ceasefire. But what he seems to have in mind is the consolidation of a ceasefire into a permanent renunciation of violence. Certainly, the formal Irish position remains as set out in the Joint Declaration which the Tanaiste has repeated several times over the last week.