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SUBJECT: ADAMS SAYS AGREEMENT IS IN TATTERS

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TEXT:

ADAMS SAYS AGREEMENT IS IN TATTERS
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The Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams, has repeated that he believes the Good Friday Agreement "is in tatters". Speaking at Dublin Airport this morning on his way to Washington with Senior Sinn Fein members Martin McGuinness and Joe Cahill, Mr Adams said that with every day that goes by without the institutions in the North being reinstated, the peace process is getting deeper and deeper into trouble.

The Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Cowen, who is also going to the US, said that the only way out of the present crisis is through the full implementation of all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement. Mr Cowen said that he will be using every opportunity in the US to try and make progress towards breaking the impasse in the peace process.

The Irish Premier, Bertie Ahern, speaking on his departure yesterday from Australia to Washington, said the visit would afford the opportunity for all of the Northern leaders to engage in discussion. They still hoped to get the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement, he said.

"That will mean that we resolve all the aspects that we have failed to resolve. We must get the institutions up and running as soon as possible and we must also endeavour to deal with the arms issue, another outstanding issue," he said.

Outlining his strategy for dealing with the "guns for government" stance of the Ulster Unionists which brought down the Northern Ireland executive more than a month ago, the Taoiseach stated: "I think we all want to hear from all of the paramilitary groups that the war is over and that there will be no use of arms in the future. We also want to hear that peace and the ceasefires will hold. We have troops and military infrastructure in areas that are particularly difficult. They are part of our discussions. Hopefully, we can reach a conclusion."

He reiterated that they had to find means that would put arms beyond reach "and that is, perhaps, trying to define the difficulties that we have". The Taoiseach re-emphasized that demilitarisation had to be part of the overall

implementation of the Belfast Agreement.

"I have always stated - and this is something that the British government agrees with - as the threat recedes so also should the military structure and the enormous amount of military infrastructure in south Armagh, particularly in areas like Crossmaglen."

There had been no difficulties in Crossmaglen of any substantial nature since the summer of 1994. The people of south Armagh said there were at least as many troops, and possibly higher surveillance, than at any time in peacetime. "That was a particular difficulty" he said.

Asked if demilitarisation was still linked to putting arms beyond use, Mr Ahern responded that demilitarisation was putting arms beyond use, less military presence, taking guns out of Irish politics, getting rid of the tower blocks, closing the detention centres, closing the paramilitary centres and all the other things.

"Decommissioning is part of the Good Friday agreement. It is a more focused issue. I think that in the short term - and this is significant - we have to find a resolution to decommissioning. Of course, in the longer term, it can be linked to overall demilitarisation," he said.

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