

## Effective Disarmament and Ratification of the ATT

35<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of the Parliamentarians for Global Action

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By Senator Jim Walsh

### Slide One

#### Introduction

In Ireland, as have other countries which have had troubles in their past, the issue of weapons can play a major role in fuelling the troubles. Therefore, before I go any further, I wish to praise the Colombian authorities on the prompt signing of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Every conflict is different, but perhaps lessons can be taken from the Irish experience which could assist peace process discussions – e.g. Palestinian/Israeli, Egypt, Syria – and also Colombia.

John Hume SDLP

David Trimble UUP

Gerry Adams SF

Ian Paisley DUP

Martin McGuinness SF

Peter Robinson DUP

Albert Reynolds FF

John Major (Margaret Thatcher) Tory

Bertie Ahern FF

Tony Blair New LAB

Bill Clinton (George Mitchel Chair) PATIENCE

Both IRA Leaders now fully integrated into Political life – recognition that they acted in good faith

Gerry Adams – now leader of the Sinn Féin in Dáil Éireann

Martin McGuinness – Deputy First Minister in the NI Executive

## Slide Two

### A history of the troubles 1968 to 1998

- 1922 – The Treaty led to the Partition of Ireland (Plantation of Ulster 1609)
- 1965 – First meeting between two Governments – Sean Lemass/Terence O'Neill
- Discrimination against Catholics/Nationalists – housing, jobs, one-man-one-vote
- 1969 - Inspired by Civil Rights Campaigns US and France (Student Protests)
- Civil Rights movement led to Riots 14-17 August
- 1971 - Internment without trial introduced August 1971  
Loyalist Paramilitaries/Collusion
- 1972 - Bloody Sunday – 30 January 1972
- 1973 - Sunningdale Agreement
- 1985 - Anglo Irish Agreement gave the Irish Government an institutional and consultative role in the governing of Northern Ireland for the first time.

During this period the British Army had taken control of security in Northern Ireland and at a civil rights march in Derry on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1972 they shot twenty seven unarmed civilians, of whom fourteen were killed. This obviously led to a huge international out-cry, the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin, and created tremendous hostility within Nationalist Ireland. Bloody Sunday was a significant event in attracting young recruits to join the ranks of the IRA. The subsequent attempt to try to label the civilians that were shot as members of the IRA only antagonised and exacerbated the reaction.

The violence and the death toll continued through the 1970's including, inter alia, the Dublin and Monaghan bombings carried out by Loyalist paramilitaries involving collusion of the British Forces, where thirty four people were killed; the Warrenpoint ambush, where eighteen British Army Soldiers were killed by an IRA bomb.

A seminal event occurred in the summer of 1981, when IRA prisoners, campaigning for political status, went on hunger strike and ten prisoners died. The first to die was Bobby Sands and it had a significant impact on public opinion. In fact, in the general election in the Republic in 1981, a number of the prisoners on hunger strike were elected to Parliament. They subsequently died.

Downing Street Declaration of 1993 and a Framework Document in 1995, provided a vision upon which the Good Friday Agreement could be negotiated. The multi-party talks, leading up to this agreement, were unprecedented in that they brought together for the first time all Northern Irish political parties, including those linked to paramilitary groups like Sinn Fein, the PUP and the UDP. The Good Friday Agreement was signed in April of 1998.

As I mentioned earlier a transferable trait which needs to be applied to all peace processes is one of patience as we learned from the actions of Senator George Mitchel (Chair) and General de Chastelin and his team at the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning.

## Slide Three

### DEVOLVING THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

**The Assembly** – (composed of 8 political parties with full legislative and executive Authority)

**The Executive** - (composed of First and deputy First Ministers, Government Departmental Ministers and Departmental Committees)

**The Civic Forum** - (consultative mechanism on social, economic and cultural issues)

**The North-South Ministerial Council** - (consultation and cooperation between NI and the RoI)

**The British-Irish Council** - (exchange information, discuss, consult, co-operate)  
British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference ('Totality of Relationships')

## Slide Four

### Disarming in the Peace Process

Independent International Commission on Decommissioning was set up in overseeing the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons in Northern Ireland. Set up in a joint act by both the British and Irish governments, made up of General John de Chastelain, Brigadier Tauno Nieminen and Donald C Johnson, it played a major role in bringing peace to the peace process.

The **main aim of the commission** was to;

- **Consult both governments.**
- **Devising and presenting set of proposals on how to achieve decommissioning.**
- **Facilitate the process by observing, monitoring and assisting with decommissioning.**
- **Reporting periodically on progress.**

As part of the Good Friday Agreement, both sides committed to disarmament but as history would show this commitment was a difficult one to follow through on for many years. It led to a stop start devolution/decommissioning dance which ultimately ended in success for the peace process.

The International Commission on Decommissioning was an example of the patience needed in a decommissioning process. The following timeline is an example of how de Chastelain and his colleagues held the peace process together at times with their patience and longer time strategy.

**1998:** Good Friday Agreement

**December 1998:** The Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) decommissioned small arms and ammunition

**2000:** Peter Mandelson, Northern Ireland Secretary of State, signs order suspending the devolution after a failure to reach a deal on IRA decommissioning.

**2001:** David Trimble resigns. General John de Chastelain says IRA has put forward a plan to put its weapons beyond use.

**November 2001:** Devolution up and running again.

**April 2002:** IRA says it has put a second tranche of its arsenal beyond use.

The lengthiest suspension of the institutions was from 2002 to 2007 during which there was a shift in political support in Northern Ireland. More hard line DUP surpassed UUP (had governed since partition).

**December 2004:** Paisley insists on photographic proof of further acts of IRA decommissioning. Adams responds that republicans will not be humiliated.

**September 2005:** IRA decommissioning of weapons completed

**September 2006:** St Andrews Agreement – parties meet to discuss devolution of power to Northern Ireland.

**February 2006:** IMC report “IRA seem to be moving in right direction”.

**October 2006:** IMC declare “IRA campaign is over”.

**March 2007:** After parliamentary elections Adams and Paisley met and trash out an agreement for power sharing government.

**May 2007:** restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly, formation (on 8 May 2007) of a new Northern Ireland Executive and a decision by Sinn Féin to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland, courts and rule of law.

**May 2007:** Direct rule end as Paisley and McGuinness sworn in as leader and deputy leader.

**June 2009:** Ulster Volunteer Force decommissioned their weapons

**January 2010:** Ulster Defence Association decommissioned their weapons

**February 2010:** The UDA South East Antrim Brigade completed decommissioning

## Slide Five

Agreement on Confidence Building measures

- Issues that were central to the conflict

- a) **Decommissioning** – of paramilitary arms
- b) **Demilitarisation and Normalisation of the Security Situation**
  - i. Removal of security operations
  - ii. Reduction of ground forces
  - iii. Removal of emergency powers
- c) **Police Reform** – RUC (Unionist) quota system – recruit Catholics
- d) **Criminal Justice** – devolved to power sharing Executive
- e) **Prisoners** – early release of paramilitary prisoners affiliated to organisations judged to be in unequivocal cease fire –minimum 2 year sentence to be served. “On the runs” – also served 2 year minimum when arrested.
- f) **Civil Rights** – safeguards/Equality of Opportunity
  - i. Incorporated European Convention on the Human Rights NI
  - ii. Established Human Rights and Equality Commission to monitor institutions of Good Friday Agreement.

### **O/S Contentious Issue – The “Disappeared” – Victims and the Truth**

- a) No closure for victims/bereaved – collusion
- b) NI AG JOHN LARKIN PROPOSED AMNESTY  
Long Term impunity and lack of accountability is a foe, not a friend of democracy and stability.

## **Slide Six**

### Present Day Northern Ireland

Obviously a lot of progress has ensued since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. A new election to the Assembly reinstated the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein as the leading political parties, with the new Executive under first Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, re-elected and working together well as the North develops both economically and socially.

In Northern Ireland tourism numbers are up and Derry has spent 2013 as the European Capital of Culture.

Both First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness regularly working together on overseas trade missions to make a better future for Northern Ireland.

It is my view that present day Northern Ireland is a good example of what can be achieved when people have faith in the political process and have commitment and patience to work at it until they succeed.





## Slide Seven

### Colombia learning from the Irish example

We have seen in recent weeks just how far Colombia has come in their own peace process-scenes of President Santos singing 'peace, not a step backwards' to school kids in a previously rebel controlled area, shows the progress and appetite for peace.

I note recent progress on "political participation" and rural development/land reform (nothing agreed until everything agreed).

The Irish experience is just that an example, a template to follow rather than a tailor made fix. By studying the Irish Peace Process my Colombian friends can see, as peace talks between the Farc rebels and government officials have recently begun with patience and a willing compromise on both sides can leave a better environment for their next generation. To quote President Santos himself "**You cannot end a conflict of 50 years in 50 weeks**". In Ireland we learned that these issues take time. It is what is meant by patience. The stop-start nature of the peace process can be frustrating at times, but like General De Chastelain and his colleagues knew that over the long term peace is achievable. They knew that even after the agreement was made there might be some setbacks but ultimately the agreement would lead to peace.

It illustrates clearly that these conflicts may not be settled by security measures alone. Parliamentarians do and can make a difference when people recognise that the **underlying causes of conflict must be comprehensively settled in order to ensure a sustainable lasting peace to which we all aspire.**

#### Leadership

Vision	Peace -Common Good
Integrity	Reconciliation
Courage	Magnanimity
Inspire	Imbue others

In Ireland, we take deep interest in the developing Colombian Peace Process. I hope this insight into our peace process can be of benefit to Colombia's own peace efforts.

JFK "One man can make a difference and every man should try" – Carpe Diem