

Statement on New Initiatives in Support of Peace in Northern Ireland May 7, 1998

Today, I met with 10 women and men representing the WAVE Center in Northern Ireland, a support group for those who have been touched by the political violence of the past three decades. Each of these extraordinary individuals, representing both traditions in Northern Ireland, has suffered—losing members of their families or being badly wounded themselves. I was inspired by their courage in rejecting violence and working for lasting peace in a land where people are not labeled by religion or national preference, inspired by their vision of a future marked by reconciliation and cooperation. And I will never forget their personal stories of sorrow and suffering, stories which are shared by many people of both communities in Northern Ireland. WAVE proves hatred can be overcome by hope, division can give way to unity, as victims of Northern Ireland's tragic past work together for brighter future.

The Good Friday Agreement, forged by an extraordinary group of leaders representing the full range of Northern Ireland society and politics, offers the people of Northern Ireland the chance of a lifetime to secure a lasting peace. It is time for all the parties to say no—once and for all—to violence and yes to hope, to make a decisive break with the past and launch a brighter future. There is no better way to honor the sacrifice of the people with whom I met today—and so many more like them.

America has stood by those who have stood for peace, and we will continue to do our part to help the people of Northern Ireland realize tangible benefits of peace—so the despair that accompanied violence can give way to faith in the future.

Since 1993, this administration and the Congress have contributed \$100 million to the International Fund for Ireland for Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland. I am today announcing a series of actions to bolster the foundations of peace.

First, I am committed to seeing that the new West Belfast Springvale Campus project is completed. I intend to work with Congress to make available up to \$5 million to make this happen. As a first step, I am directing Jim Lyons, my Adviser for Economic Initiatives, who is also

our observer on the Board of the International Fund for Ireland, to confirm that the IFI will approve those funds. Four years ago, at our initiative, we and our partners in the IFI provided the initial £5 million that seeded this project. Straddling the peace line that once divided Protestant from Catholic, the Springvale Campus will give students of both communities the chance to acquire the education to match their indomitable spirit—and in so doing, encourage cohesion, community pride, and economic growth.

I am asking the United States Information Agency to support the Springvale Campus with its full range of educational programs, including Fulbright, international visitors, and citizen exchanges. USIA will also foster links between Springvale and one or more American universities to promote cooperation between their faculties and establish long-term ties.

Second, the United States is committed to helping the communities in Northern Ireland build the new institutions created by the April 10 accord. The new Assembly will give the people both a voice and a stake in their peace, but the challenges to create a functioning institution are great. My administration will work with Congress to make available \$500,000 as soon as possible to fund programs to support this effort.

Third, Secretary Daley will visit Northern Ireland in early June with a high-level U.S. business delegation to intensify what is already a substantial economic relationship. With peace holding firm, there are strong business opportunities we must pursue now to boost prosperity and the hope for the future that is crucial to the foundations of peace.

Fourth, USIA is supporting the collaboration of the Philadelphia Jobs Initiative with Worktrain, a Northern Ireland welfare-to-work initiative. I will meet with representatives of the two organizations during the U.S.-EU Summit in London.

Finally, I am pleased to announce a Vital Voices Conference to be held in Belfast in early fall, with cosponsorship from the United States and regional partners. This conference will

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showcase and support women's role in the economic and political life of their society. The women of Northern Ireland—wives, mothers, and daughters—have borne an enormous share of the trauma of the Troubles. Now, their participation will be essential to build a future of peace and reconciliation. I've asked the First Lady to travel to Belfast to take part in this important conference.

We have seen around the world how Americans have rallied to help the lands of their ancestors. I hope the Irish-American community will continue to support the voices of peace in Northern Ireland. My administration will continue to do all we can to foster hope and healing in Northern Ireland and to help its people build a new age of peace for their families and future generations.

Statement on Senate Action on Internal Revenue Service Reform Legislation

May 7, 1998

I am very pleased that IRS reform took a major step forward today with bipartisan passage of the Senate bill. We've worked hard to give the American people an IRS that is fairer and more responsive to their needs and to support the many dedicated IRS employees who do want to serve them well. We've made progress, and final passage of this reform bill will help our efforts to give Americans the modern, customer-friendly IRS they deserve.

Vice President Gore and Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin last year completed a top-to-bottom review of customer service at the IRS. This effort has launched a complete revamping of customer service at the IRS. IRS offices and phones are open longer, problemsolving days have been instituted, and independent citizen advocacy panels are being launched. I've also appointed a new kind of IRS Commissioner. Charles Rossotti is an experienced businessman who understands technology and understands customer service. Certainly, not every problem

will be solved overnight, but our new Commissioner is committed to ongoing reform and to correcting problems when they arise.

The Senate bill, like the House bill, will provide Commissioner Rossotti the tools he needs to succeed, and it will expand taxpayer rights. The new personnel flexibility provisions will allow the IRS to bring in talent and expertise from the private sector. The bill provides taxpayers with a stronger Taxpayer Advocate. It also advances the important goal of expanding electronic filing of tax returns to make it easier for taxpayers.

I urge the House and Senate to act quickly and send me a bill to sign that expands taxpayer rights and moves us forward towards delivering an IRS the American people deserve. We will continue to work with the Congress on a bipartisan basis on a final bill that advances our shared goals, that avoids unintended benefits for noncompliant taxpayers, and that is consistent with our commitment to fiscal discipline.

Remarks to the Arab American Institute Conference

May 7, 1998

Thank you, Jim. To Elie Abboud and Fuad Ateyeh, all the members of the Arab American Institute, the National Arab American Business Association, Palestinian American Congress; to Prince Bandar and the members of the diplomatic corps—all of you, thank you for coming. My fellow Americans: I like getting advice from

Jim Zogby's mother. *[Laughter]* And she has a remarkable read on the world. Her son John, a renowned pollster, has nothing on her. In fact, I think her numbers are better than his for me sometimes. *[Laughter]* I also want to say a special word of appreciation to Jim for his advice over the years. He is a remarkable voice