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Brussels, November 15, 1985

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Statement by the President of the European Commission

On behalf of the European Commission I congratulate the Irish and British Governments on the agreement announced today on the future of Northern Ireland. This development is clearly of great significance firstly to the people of Northern Ireland, secondly to the relations between the peoples of two Member States of the Community, and thirdly to the European Community as a whole.

Underlying the establishment of the European Community was the determination to create a European framework of common interest: "Resolved to substitute for age-old rivalries the merging of their essential interests; to create, by establishing an economic community, the basis for a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts; and to lay the foundations for institutions which will give direction to a destiny henceforward shared".

Europe has learnt from its past that violence is not the answer to difficult problems; it wreaks death and destruction; it drives communities apart; and it negates efforts to create jobs and improve living standards. Violence from whatever source is against all we stand for and must be condemned. The creation of the European Community has demonstrated that a credible alternative exists in the process of negotiation between democratic states and that it can lead to the establishment of new structures and processes in which differing identities and loyalties can be accommodated. It has thus shown that it is possible to guarantee to each and every one the chance to share in the development of their homeland and that this can be done in a climate of tolerance while respecting the beliefs and convictions of all.

The Irish/British agreement is true to that goal of peaceful settlement. I salute the two Governments who, in their lengthy negotiations, have demonstrated initiative, courage and imagination in the search for peace and stability.

In the past, the institutions of the Community - the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament - have given concrete expression to their concern about the problems of Northern Ireland. The Commission's communication to the European Parliament in November 1984, summarised the impact of present Community policies and actions. I pledge the continued wholehearted support of the Commission to the economic and social development of Northern Ireland and to effective cross border co-operation. I thus support the objectives underlying the agreement announced today.