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NEWS

PRESIDENT SANTER SAYS NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS MUST CONTINUE

European Commission President Jacques Santer has condemned the February 9 IRA bomb attack in London which left two people dead and many others injured.

In a statement released February 10, President Santer called for a cessation of violence and urged the parties to continue efforts towards a negotiated solution:

"Yesterday's bomb attack in London is an outrage but it must not be allowed to end the Northern Ireland peace process. Terrorism will not solve the conflict.

Nobody could have expected negotiations to be easy, but they offer the only hope of a solution. The ceasefire has stopped the spiral of violence and aggression giving the people in Northern Ireland the chance to start rebuilding their lives and giving the European Commission the opportunity to contribute to the financing of much needed confidence-building projects.

During my visit in Northern Ireland, I have personally seen how much this meant to everyone. I therefore join all those who call for a continuation of the ceasefire and for a determined pursuance of a negotiated solution. Yesterday's explosion must not end the past seventeen months of hope."

On the strength of the IRA ceasefire, which began on August 31, 1994, the European Union put together a 300 million ECU* aid package to support economic growth, peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. A spokeswoman for Regional Affairs Commissioner Monika Wulf-Mathies said today that no change was foreseen in the implementation of the package.

As part of the EU's efforts to reduce disparities among its regions, Northern Ireland received over \$1 billion from the EU's Structural Funds between 1989 and 1993, and will receive another \$1.5 billion between 1994 and 1999. Since 1989, the EU has contributed almost \$20 million a year to the International Fund for Ireland, which was set up in 1986.

1 ECU = \$1.28 on February 12, 1996

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