

BRUTON WELCOMES IRA MOVE ON WEAPONS

Dublin, October 22, 2001

Following the announcement that the Irish terrorist organisation IRA would decommission part of its weapons cache, EPP Vice-President John BRUTON TD, a former Taoiseach (prime minister) of Ireland, today issued the following statement:

"The verified commencement of weapons destruction by the IRA is very welcome. It clears the way for the re-establishment of the institutions of the Belfast Agreement, which provide fair representation for all traditions in Ireland.

"The European People's Party expresses the hope that these institutions will now be used to the full to rebuild trust between the communities in Northern Ireland and end the vicious sectarianism that has marred Northern Ireland life for many years.

"It is important, if the terms of the Belfast Agreement are to be met, that all weapons of paramilitaries are destroyed. This means that the Loyalist paramilitaries must start destroying their weapons, as they implied that they would do many years ago. It also means that the remaining IRA weapons must be promptly destroyed, and its military structures put aside.

"If people in Northern Ireland are to live normal lives, punishment beatings and intimidation by paramilitary organizations must end. Now that an acceptable police service is being introduced there is no continuing excuse for private policing of the kind that has been inflicted on many neighbourhoods for years.

"This welcome event in Ireland must not lead to any relaxation in the Europe-wide battle against terrorism of all kinds. We have seen the extent of the hardship that terrorism can cause in the United States, and in Spain. The European People's Party is committed to supporting vigorous European Union action against terrorism, including the introduction of a European Arrest Warrant, and close co-operation between judicial and police authorities throughout Europe."