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PRESS RELEASE

Second Report of Independent Reporting Commission

The Independent Reporting Commission (the IRC) has today published its Second Report on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity.

The four Commissioners: John McBurney and Monica McWilliams, who were nominated by the Northern Ireland Executive; Tim O'Connor, nominated by the Irish Government, and Mitchell Reiss, nominated by the UK Government are tasked with reporting annually to the UK and Irish Governments and to the Northern Ireland Executive.

Commenting on their document which provides scrutiny of the progress and the relevant measures taken by the two Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive towards ending paramilitary activity, the Commissioners state that paramilitarism remains a stark reality in Northern Ireland and continues to be a serious obstacle to peace and reconciliation.

The Commissioners also note the political vacuum in Northern Ireland and the continuing uncertainty regarding Brexit. Alongside the increase in the number of deaths and attacks and other disturbing events linked to paramilitary organisations in the last year, the task of ending paramilitarism has become immeasurably more difficult.

The Commissioners reiterate their analysis from their First Report of October 2018 that ending paramilitarism can only be sustainably brought about by means of a Twin Track Approach, which combines policing and justice responses alongside systemically tackling the serious socio economic deprivation facing the communities where the paramilitaries operate. In their Second Report, the Commissioners go further and recommend that tackling paramilitarism be made a new dedicated outcome in the Programme for Government as the best way of achieving the whole-of-system approach they believe is needed.

They point to the need for neighbourhood policing to be enhanced and for urgent action to address the delay in cases coming before the courts. The Commissioners also highlight the need for increased asset recovery, recommending that an agency focusing solely on civil recovery of the proceeds of crime be established in Northern Ireland. They further believe that the time has come for consideration to be given to a Transition Process for paramilitaries as a necessary next step.

Recognising that all of this raises challenging and difficult questions, the Commissioners call for a major public debate to begin, aware that their recommendations to end continuing paramilitary activity will need the support and confidence of the whole of society.

Ends

For further media enquiries please contact Maria McCann at McCann Public Relations on 02890 666322 or 07802934246

Notes for Editors:

Report is available at 12.00 pm Monday 4th November at <https://www.ircommission.org/publications>

In the Fresh Start Agreement of 2015, from which the IRC's mandate flows, the two Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive recommitted themselves to bringing paramilitarism to an end once and for all. The IRC's mandate is to report on progress towards reaching that goal and to make recommendations on what more can be done.

The creation of the Independent Reporting Commission was one of the commitments set out in the Fresh Start Agreement to tackle paramilitary activity. The Commission was established in August 2017 by an International Treaty between the UK and Irish Governments.

The Commission does not have an operational role or make security assessments about the various paramilitary organisations. Its task is to consult with key stakeholders and to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity and on implementation of measures to address the issue.

The Commission is required to consult with a broad range of stakeholders, including the Irish Government and law enforcement agencies, the UK government and relevant law enforcement agencies and, in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, other statutory agencies, local councils, communities and civic society organisations.