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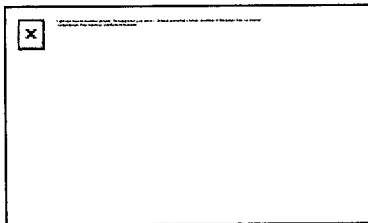
**From:** sbwhoep[redacted]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 5, 2010 6:58 AM  
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**Subject:** Bravo! Brava! Issue your statement! Sid

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## Northern Ireland agrees power-sharing deal

Gordon Brown hails historic deal which will see justice and policing powers be devolved to Stormont from 12 April

- [Henry McDonald](#)
- [guardian.co.uk](#), Friday 5 February 2010 11.42 GMT
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Gordon Brown, the DUP leader, Peter Robinson, and Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness (l to r) talk to the press after the Northern Ireland power-sharing deal was announced. Photograph: Julien Behal/PA

Justice and policing powers will be devolved to Northern Ireland's power-sharing government from 12 April in a historic deal agreed by the main parties that "opens a new chapter" after decades of violence, Gordon Brown said today. Standing alongside his Irish counterpart, Brian Cowen, at a press conference at Hillsborough Castle outside Belfast, the prime minister said the "inspirational" agreement between Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist party (DUP) was a foundation for lasting peace.

The deal – finally agreed to by the DUP last night and described as a final piece in the jigsaw after a long search for peace – comes after two weeks of round-the-clock negotiations and brings an end to fears that the power-sharing government might collapse.

It will see policing and justice powers devolved from Westminster to the assembly within weeks and includes new plans on overseeing parades.

Brown, who travelled to Belfast this morning, said the agreement had been possible because of "a new spirit of mutual co-operation and respect".

The deal meets a key Sinn Féin demand and prevents the republican party from walking out of the power-sharing executive. In return, the DUP has secured reforms to the way loyalist marches are handled in Northern Ireland, including the abolition of the Parades Commission, a body most unionists regard as biased in favour of nationalists.

A cross-community vote will now be held in the Stormont assembly on 9 March before the policing and justice powers are devolved from London on 12 April.

Brown told reporters: "The achievements have been as great as they are inspirational. This moment and this agreement belongs to the people of Northern Ireland, all of the people, and now more than ever before so does their future ... This is the last chapter of a long and troubled story and the beginning of a new chapter after decades of violence, years of talks, weeks of stalemate."

Cowen praised both unionists and nationalists for making "fair and balanced compromises" to bridge the divisions and said the quality of the negotiations meant that the "devolved institutions can and will work".

The Northern Ireland secretary, Shaun Woodward, said the deal would further isolate republican dissidents who have launched three separate gun and bomb attacks against police stations in the province over the last 10 days. The deal would "absolutely" make Northern Ireland a safer place, he said.

The DUP leader, Peter Robinson, said the agreement "will be more enduring because of the time spent" in forming it.

Referring back to the Belfast Agreement of 1998 when negotiations bore fruit at the 11th hour, the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, described the current deal and the rescue of power-sharing as "yet another very good Friday". Jeffrey Donaldson told the Guardian the DUP's 36-strong assembly team was now unanimously in favour of the deal. But the Ulster Unionist party (UUP) has yet to officially back the package which will allow the assembly to set up legislation to change the way parades are judged.

A UUP spokeswoman said members wanted to see the proposed agreement before giving their response to the two governments. "We have not had sight of this agreement and until we do we will not be signing up to it," she said. The talks, which centred on Hillsborough Castle, outside Belfast, are the longest set of continuous negotiations held in the near 20-year peace process. Sinn Féin had accused the DUP of stalling on the transfer of policing powers for the last three years and it was feared that failure to find agreement could see the collapse of the power-sharing government led by the two parties.

The agreement finally came near midnight at Stormont's parliament building. Earlier in the evening Sinn Féin had said the basis of a deal was on the table and it was giving the DUP leadership the time to persuade its party to accept it. Robinson emerged from a meeting of party colleagues to confirm that he had secured unanimous support for the proposals. Earlier in the week up to 14 DUP assembly members had opposed a proposed deal because it did not give unionists enough concessions.

Robinson said he would now look to gain the support of the community and the smaller assembly parties for the deal. "We have a basis upon which we can go forward and recommend it [the deal] to our party, to the other parties in Northern Ireland and to the community.

"An essential element of the Democratic Unionist Party's manifesto is the requirement for community confidence; we believe this can be the basis for gaining that confidence."

However the leader of the hardline Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV), Jim Allister, questioned why the 14 DUP rebels had changed their minds.

"The deal hasn't changed, only the snowmen of the DUP, who melted once the heat came on," Allister said.

The DUP now faces a struggle to ward off the TUV threat in the forthcoming general election. Allister will portray the deal as a sell-out of unionist principles and a sop to republicanism.