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BELFAST'S "LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF PEACE" IMPRESS CLINTON

(Text: Remarks at 11/30 Queen's Univ. reception) (960)

Belfast, Northern Ireland -- President Clinton says he will take from his visit to Northern Ireland many enduring memories, including "a lot of lasting impressions of peace."

He spoke during a November 30 reception at The Queen's University in Belfast celebrating the establishment at Queen's of a distinguished lecturer program named for the late U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright.

Following is the text of his remarks:

(Begin text)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Four more years! (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: The plane for America leaves tomorrow morning. I want you to be on it. (Laughter.) We'll take you back.

Thank you, Sir Patrick and Lady Mayhew. And I thank you, Sir Patrick, for your tireless efforts for peace in Northern Ireland.

I want to thank the Vice Chancellor, Sir Gordon Beveridge, and everyone here at Queen's University for allowing us to meet at this wonderful place in the year of its sesquicentennial celebration. I am delighted to be here. And I'm also delighted that it was given to me the honor to make a little announcement honoring Queen's. Under the auspices of the Fulbright program, named after the late Senator from my home state, J. William Fulbright, who gave me my first job in public life, we are establishing a distinguished Fulbright lecturer program here at Queen's University to bring distinguished Americans to share their experiences and ideas with their academic colleagues here and to reach out to the community throughout Northern Ireland.

Let me say that Hillary and I are delighted to be here with a very large contingent of Americans from all walks of life and from both political parties. I am delighted to be the first American president ever to visit Northern Ireland while serving as president. And I think all of you here know that I would, given the choice, never miss a chance to go to an exciting place and make new friends. But the real reason I'm here is because of the hard work and the tough choices that many of you in this room have made to advance the cause of peace and reconciliation in this land. And I thank you for that.

I will take away from this visit a lot of enduring memories, a lot of lasting impressions of peace. When we were at the Mackie Plant this morning, it really struck me as a symbol of Northern Ireland's rebirth since the cease-fire. On the shop floor, men and women who come to the plant by separated gates still work together side by side with common goals for their families and their communities.

I went to the Enterprise Park in East Belfast, and I met with tenants and managers who were making the most of their ideas, their potential, assisted, among other things, by the International Fund for Ireland.

I went to Londonderry where we had an extraordinary crowd, and I saw the splendor of that beautiful old city wall, and also the remarkable statue of reconciliation there, which is also a sharp reminder. If you've seen it, you know there are two tall figures with their hands outstretched, but they're not quite touching yet.

And, of course, tonight at the Christmas tree lighting, for Hillary and for me it was an especially poignant moment, not only because it reaffirmed the ties between our two lands with the President's Prize and the Christmas tree from your sister city of Nashville and because of those remarkable letters that those children wrote, but also because of what I saw and felt in that vast throng of people.

And when I was shaking hands in the crowd there when there were no microphones on and no cameras shining, person after person that I shook hands with said, "We're glad you're here. We're trying to do this. Please stay with us, we haven't finished yet. The peace is not certain yet. We have to do this." Person after person. Person after person said, "Surely we'll never go back to the way it used to be." Just people in the crowd with their passion and energy and intensity.

I will remember this day for as long as I live, with great gratitude. And let me say what I have said all day, I am proud that the United States stands with the peacemakers here. We respect each tradition equally. We believe peace can only be built here on the basis of mutual consent, and, in fact, only on that basis. We continue to stand with those who take risks. And we want to see that there are clear, concrete benefits to peace through trade and investments and new jobs and new futures. We will do everything we can to work with all of you to sustain the momentum that Northern Ireland has at this point.

Let me finally say that I have taken a strict and unyielding position about the role of the United States as a force for peace throughout the world. Whether in the Middle East or in Bosnia or here, it is that we cannot, and we could not even if we wanted to, impose a peace on anyone. People must make their own peace -- from their heads and from their hearts. All we can do is to do the very best we can to create the best conditions in which people can make peace, and to give the greatest encouragement to the process of peace, and to offer the hope of every reward we can possibly help to provide.

That is our role. That will remain our role. The details, the direction and the question of whether you will go forward -- that, my friends, is all up to you. But if you do, we will be proud to walk with you.

Thank you, and Merry Christmas.

(End text)