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# MEDIA WATCH

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**26 January 2018 – 2 February 2019**

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## Anniversary of peace will feel hollow if talks fail: Coveney

RESTORING power-sharing at Stormont would be the best way to mark the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney has said.

Mr Coveney was speaking as the second day of talks to break the political stalemate in Northern Ireland ended. The DUP described discussions so far as positive.

The parties held a series of bilateral meetings with each other and with Secretary of State Karen Bradley. The Irish Foreign Minister wasn't present for yesterday's talks, but will be back at Stormont today.

Addressing TDs in Dublin, Mr Coveney said restoring the political institutions was a priority and he would do all he could to facilitate a deal.

"The most important thing that we could do to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement is to get devolved government up and running and functioning again, and the institutions that come from that in terms of North-South Ministerial Councils and so on functioning again," he said.

"This is not going to be easy but we do have a responsibility, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement with the British Government to try to get those structures up and running.

"I think that many of these commemorations would be somewhat hollow if people have seen the progress that so many worked so hard to create over the last 20 years actually being undermined and going backwards, without the essential institutions, which really are at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement, and the process of reconciliation, which ultimately needs to be the number one priority in Northern Ireland."

Mr Coveney said he was doing everything he could to facilitate a process to allow "an accommodation between the two largest parties, and an engagement and involvement of the other

three parties, to try to get a fully inclusive Executive up and running again, making decisions for people in Northern Ireland". A DUP spokesman describe the talks so far as constructive.

"On day two we met some other parties and Karen Bradley. We will continue to engage positively in coming days. We have no red lines or preconditions and are ready to form a government immediately," he said.

The SDLP said it had a series of "very productive" meetings with other parties and Mrs Bradley. The party's deputy leader Nichola Mallon said it had been confirmed there had been "limited discussion" on reforming the petition of concern in last autumn's DUP-Sinn Fein talks.

"If these two parties are serious about a deal, the question needs to be asked: why is the reform of the petition of concern not a key focus of discussion?" Ms Mallon said.

"If we want to deliver equality and ensure that the DUP doesn't hold a veto over marriage equality in Westminster, we need to restore a government here. We need power in our hands - and that means we need to reform the petition of concern to unlock equality and ensure the sustainability of any future Assembly." The SDLP "made it very clear to the British Government that reform of the petition of concern could unlock a lot of the problems holding back the formation of a government", she added.

Alliance held a series of meetings with other parties and Mrs Bradley.

Sources described the party's meeting with the DUP as "very positive". Mrs Bradley is due to update the House of Commons on the talks on February 7, but has described that date as "a milestone", not a deadline. Westminster is extremely reluctant to introduce direct rule.

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**

**29 January 2018**

## Power blackout risk from Brexit

Gavin McLoughlin and Colm Kelpie THE country is at risk of higher electricity prices and power shortages following Brexit, a new report warns.

While the Republic and Northern Ireland currently share an all-island market for electricity, this could be disrupted if the UK leaves the European Union's internal energy market (IEM) following Brexit next year.

The report, by the UK House of Lords European Committee, calls on the British government to clarify what its energy policy would be if Britain was to leave the IEM.

Janet Daly Apart from Brexit, what is Theresa May's government for? p22 The Republic and the North are set to benefit from increased energy security and lower prices under new arrangements on the all-island electricity market, which come into force from May. However, the report warns that

maintaining the close relationship between the two jurisdictions will be tougher if the UK leaves the IEM.

A UK departure from the IEM also risks tariffs being applied to energy sold by countries remaining within the EU to Britain. Ireland imports much of its electricity from Britain.

**Source: The Irish Independent**