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SUBJECT: DRUMCREE: FURTHER IRISH REACTIONS

SUMMARY

1. Taoiseach calls for the establishment of an independent body on Orange marches. Further criticism of RUC handling of march on the Garvaghy Road from across the political spectrum.

DETAIL

2. Speaking to journalists this morning, the Taoiseach expressed grave concern over further acts of violence in Northern Ireland. He said that the inconsistency shown by the RUC in the policing of parades caused understandable anger in the Nationalist community. This was a political issue which should not have been left in the hands of a policeman. (Comment: This is at least a tacit admission that Chief Constable's decision was operational rather than political). The Taoiseach concluded by calling for the establishment of an independent body to decide whether marches should take place.

3. There has been continuing criticism of the RUC's handling of the events of the last 24 hours from across the political spectrum. In a statement issued this afternoon, Bertie Ahern, the Leader of Fianna Fail, said that the events of the last 24 hours had given Northern Ireland the appearance of being an Orange State, tolerated by British Parliamentary democracy. He questioned whether the British Government's commitment in the Framework Document to exercise rigorous impartiality in their jurisdiction and to accord full respect for parity of esteem were now just empty words. The British Government had lost the confidence of nationalist Ireland.

4. Mr Ahern went on to say that however deep the anger and frustration among the nationalist community, a return to paramilitary violence would provide no solution. He called on the

Irish Government to request an immediate meeting of the IGC and to call a full emergency session of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation next week to discuss the events of this week in and all that had happened since February. Concluding he said that it was necessary "to replace an intolerant majoritarian spirit by the principle of consent".

5. Elsewhere, at an emergency meeting of the Oireachtas Committee for Foreign Affairs this morning called to discuss the events of the last 24 hours, TDs were unanimous in condemning the handling of the march at Drumcree. A number of TDs also called for the resignation of the Northern Ireland Secretary and the RUC Chief Constable.

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