

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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Dear John,

NORTHERN IRELAND: CONSENT AND DECOMMISSIONING

Thank you for forwarding the Taoiseach's letter of 4 September. It is, as you say, completely negative and appears to represent a significant erosion of existing joint positions. The two Governments will lose all credibility with the Unionist parties if they are unable to say more than the Taoiseach's letter implies.

We agree that the next step should be for the Prime Minister to talk to the Taoiseach and I attach some speaking notes on which he may want to draw.

The objective of the call might be to reach agreement on the two Governments' strategic objectives for the next two weeks. On reflection, and taking account of Irish officials' reaction to the postponement of the UUP Executive Committee meeting, the most effective line to take with the Taoiseach is probably that

- the two Governments must remain committed to launching the substantive negotiations on 15 September;
- so far as the UUP's readiness to participate in inclusive negotiations is concerned, the signs are encouraging but Trimble will need all the help we can give him;



- the forced postponement of the UUP Executive Committee meeting from 6 to 13 September means that the UUP will probably not attend the 9 September plenary and will be in no position to take any decisions before 15 September;
- to meet the 15 September deadline the two Governments will therefore need to
 - think through the choreography of 15 September very carefully and consider how best to prepare the ground;
 - give Trimble the best possible basis for persuading the UUP Executive Committee to agree to UUP participation in inclusive negotiations, by deploying appropriate language on consent and decommissioning which is at least no weaker than existing joint positions.

We will follow-up by tabling a revised draft of the proposed procedural motion, for discussion at a Liaison Group meeting on Monday.

Paul Murphy has already written to Mr Trimble about the UUP's proposals for building confidence in the pro-Union community and stands ready to respond to any follow-up letter. The Prime Minister has yet to reply to Mr Trimble's letter of 30 June and could usefully do that during next week. (The draft which Ken Lindsay sent to you on 27 August was, with the exception of one underlined phrase, agreed with the Irish although it will now need some updating in the light of the decision to invite Sinn Féin to join the negotiations.) Any further agreed language on consent and decommissioning could be used to strengthen that letter or deployed separately. If, as proposed in my letter of 3 September, the Prime Minister is able to see Mr Trimble towards the end of next week that could be the occasion to draw all these threads together. Meanwhile we are considering a couple of articles for the Northern



Ireland media from Paul Murphy setting out the Government's position on the various confidence building measures and listing the reasons why the Unionists should participate in the negotiations.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Grant (FCO), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours sincerely,
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Richard Lemon'.

Richard Lemon
Private Secretary to Paul Murphy MP
Minister of State