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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR TRIMBLE, 30 JULY

CHECKLIST OF ISSUES

General

1. Welcome and admire the UUP's statesmanlike approach over the past 10 days, in very difficult political circumstances
 - it has avoided a breakdown which could only have benefited the Republican Movement
 - the decision to consult within the community should help to bring a wider group of people face to face with political realities
 - the decision to take Sinn Féin on in public debate in certain circumstances is welcome. Otherwise they have an easy ride.
2. We now need to decide:
 - whether and how the decommissioning issue can be resolved to your satisfaction
 - what structure the talks might have in September
 - where the talks process is likely to lead
 - confidence building measures for Unionists.

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Decommissioning

3. The Joint Decommissioning Paper of 25 June:

- both Governments remain committed to it
- there is very little room for substantive changes
- I am ready to work with Bertie Ahern to offer further clarification
- I know he is keen to create the circumstances for fully inclusive dialogue
- I know you have not received a formal reply to your letter of 30 June, although we have discussed the issues several times. Can give you a reply now if that would be helpful, but it may make better sense for you to get a more developed response in a few weeks' time. [NB; we have undertaken to consult the Irish over the terms of any draft reply].
- I suggest we revert to this at the end of August.

Independent Commission

4. The two Governments are not in a position to establish the Commission until the three strands of substantive negotiations are formally launched:

- we and the Irish Government will nevertheless ensure that all the necessary preparatory work is completed in time for the Commission to be fully operational from 15 September, with

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options for draft schemes for decommissioning available from that date

- we could sign the International Agreement to set up the Commission now, but we and the Irish want to make life as easy as possible for you and believe it may be more effective to choreograph the formal steps in establishing the Commission over the last week of August/first half of September.
- one issue for resolution is the chairmanship of the Commission. General de Chastelain is the best qualified and most likely to make vigorous and rapid progress, but would need to be relieved of the distraction of chairing "Strand II" negotiations. Would you be willing to facilitate the necessary change to the rules of procedure? Content to accept Senator Mitchell as chair of Strand II?

Talks Structures

5. I very much hope you will be able to help us resolve the decommissioning issue and join in round table negotiations (which may by then be fully inclusive) in September.

6. The two Governments remain determined to start substantive discussions on 15 September, whatever happens. I should be interested to hear your views on how those discussions might be taken forward.

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If there is no basis for agreement on decommissioning

- move into the three strands with the issue technically unresolved but the machinery fully in place
- move, at least temporarily, into bilaterals, trilaterals etc with a view to identifying the scope for agreement on substantive issues (again with the machinery to enable decommissioning fully in place).

Where is the talks process headed?

7. You are right to emphasise the strains which democratic dialogue will place on the Republican Movement. They are between a rock and a very hard place. We made them an offer they couldn't refuse, but if the talks make progress towards a reasonable settlement, the Republican Movement will be under huge pressure, including from the whole spectrum of constitutional nationalism.

8. Such a settlement will require Northern Ireland to become a place in which nationalists feel comfortable to live. The key elements are likely to be:

- responsibility sharing in Northern Ireland, with real powers (executive and legislative) over a wide range of issues
- a replacement for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I should be interested to have your thoughts on how the wider British/Irish relationship could be developed and what implications that might have for our approach to the negotiations

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- a new relationship between the two parts of Ireland to facilitate close co-operation, extending to new institutional structures (albeit with clear lines of devolved authority from the Dail and any new Northern Ireland Assembly)
- balanced constitutional change in both jurisdictions. We will press for the removal or amendment of Articles 2 and 3. The Irish (and Sinn Féin) may attach rhetorical significance to a re-writing of Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, although [as Mr Trimble has privately acknowledged in the past] that section has no practical significance. An elaboration of the principle of consent in both jurisdictions would powerfully reinforce the Unionist position, and its approval by referendum in both jurisdictions would completely undermine the whole philosophical basis of Irish Republicanism
- measures to underline the principle of parity of esteem between the two traditions and to enhance public confidence in the police and the justice system.

Confidence Building Measures for Unionists

9. John D Taylor's note:

- Northern Ireland Select Committee now operational. First meeting this afternoon
- Northern Ireland Grand Committee. Secretary of State has put proposals to relevant Cabinet colleagues [with a view to getting the Committee operational immediately after the recess].

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- I understand Mo Mowlam is to have a meeting with you and Martin Smyth tomorrow about the Northern Ireland legislative programme.

10. I should be very ready to consider any further proposals you may have for boosting Unionist confidence in the Government's intentions and the talks process more generally.

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