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ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT:

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

WITH PERMISSION, MR. SPEAKER, I SHOULD LIKE TO MAKE A
STATEMENT ABOUT THE MEETING WHICH I ATTENDED
WITH THE TAOISEACH ON 15 NOVEMBER.

I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MY RT. HON. AND LEARNED
FRIEND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND
COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS AND MY RT. HON. FRIEND
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.
DR. FITZGERALD WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MR. SPRING,
THE TANAISTE, AND BY MR. BARRY, THE IRISH
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

AN AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS,
WHICH HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN A COMMAND PAPER.

THE TEXT OF THE COMMUNIQUE, ISSUED AFTER THE MEETING, IS ALSO INCLUDED IN THE COMMAND PAPER.

THE PURPOSE OF THE AGREEMENT IS TO PROMOTE PEACE AND STABILITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND; TO ENCOURAGE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES THERE; TO CREATE AN IMPROVED CLIMATE OF FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND; AND TO STRENGTHEN CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY IN COMBATING TERRORISM.

THE AGREEMENT WILL NOT COME INTO FORCE UNTIL IT HAS

BEEN APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT AND BY THE IRISH
DAIL.

THE HOUSE WILL HAVE AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY FOR
A FULL DEBATE.

THE AGREEMENT HAS TWO PRINCIPAL FEATURES.

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS AFFIRMED IN A
BINDING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT THAT THE
STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND WILL REMAIN
UNCHANGED SO LONG AS THAT IS THE WISH OF THE
MAJORITY OF ITS PEOPLE.

IT HAS ALSO RECOGNISED THAT THE PRESENT WISH
OF A MAJORITY IS TO REMAIN PART OF THE UNITED

KINGDOM.

THIS IS THE MOST FORMAL COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSENT MADE BY ANY IRISH GOVERNMENT.

THE SECOND MAIN FEATURE OF THE AGREEMENT IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EXISTING ANGLO-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL.

THE CONFERENCE WILL BE SERVICED BY A SECRETARIAT ON A CONTINUING BASIS.

IN THIS CONFERENCE THE IRISH GOVERNMENT MAY PUT FORWARD VIEWS AND PROPOSALS ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS.

IF DEVOLUTION IS RESTORED - AND BOTH
GOVERNMENTS ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORT THIS -
THEN THOSE MATTERS WHICH BECOME THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT
WILL BE TAKEN OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE.

THE CONFERENCE WILL ALSO DISCUSS CROSS-BORDER
CO-OPERATION, INCLUDING IMPROVED SECURITY
CO-OPERATION.

THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE AGREED TO MAKE
DETERMINED EFFORTS TO RESOLVE ANY DIFFERENCES
THAT MAY ARISE.

BUT THE CONFERENCE WILL NOT BE A
DECISION-MAKING BODY:

FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DECISIONS AND

ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT WILL REMAIN
WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT NORTH OF
THE BORDER AND WITH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT
SOUTH OF THE BORDER.

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL

CONFERENCE WILL TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS
PRACTICABLE AFTER THE AGREEMENT ENTERS INTO
FORCE.

PARTICULAR SUBJECTS ON WHICH THE CONFERENCE
WILL CONCENTRATE AT ITS INITIAL MEETINGS
ARE:

- WAYS OF IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE
SECURITY FORCES AND THE MINORITY COMMUNITY

IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

- ACTION TO IMPROVE SECURITY CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS;
- AND WAYS TO HELP TO UNDERLINE THE
IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.

THE AGREEMENT RECOGNISES THAT IT WOULD BE FOR

PARLIAMENTARY DECISION IN WESTMINSTER AND
DUBLIN WHETHER TO ESTABLISH AN ANGLO-IRISH
PARLIAMENTARY BODY OF THE KIND DESCRIBED IN

THE ANGLO-IRISH STUDIES REPORT OF NOVEMBER
1981.

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED IN THE COMMUNIQUE
ITS INTENTION TO ACCEDE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
TO THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON THE SUPPRESSION
OF TERRORISM.

WE WELCOME THIS.

MR. SPEAKER, NO SINGLE AGREEMENT CAN RESOLVE THE
DEEPROOTED AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF NORTHERN
IRELAND AND DELIVER THE PEACE FOR WHICH THE
GREAT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND
LONG.

BUT I BELIEVE THE PRESENT AGREEMENT WILL MAKE
AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION:

- IT MAINTAINS AND CONFIRMS THE STATUS OF

NORTHERN IRELAND AS PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND RECOGNISES THE LEGITIMACY OF THE UNIONIST POSITION.

- IT PROVIDES FOR CO-OPERATION IN THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE TO BE A TWO-WAY STREET.

WE SHALL WISH TO PURSUE MATTERS AFFECTING THE REPUBLIC IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND FOR INSTANCE IMPROVED SECURITY AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION.

- IT ENCOURAGES THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO REACH AGREEMENT ON AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT.
- IT OFFERS HOPE TO ALL THOSE IN BOTH COMMUNITIES WHO WANT TO DEFEAT THE MEN OF

VIOLENCE AND WANT TO WORK TOGETHER PEACEFULLY

FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE AGREEMENT.

IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT I COMMEND IT TO THE

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Draft

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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W. J. Bennett