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**Summary of Taoiseach's Phone Conversation with President Clinton,**  
**Tuesday, 15 July, 1997**

1. President Clinton mentioned that during his recent visit to Europe, he had had a brief discussion with Prime Minister Blair on Northern Ireland: the purpose of his call was to convey his continuing commitment to supporting the efforts of the two Governments to bring about a settlement.
2. The Taoiseach expressed his appreciation for the President's close interest and engagement in the peace process and referred to the efforts currently underway to get into substantive negotiations on an inclusive basis on 15 September. President Clinton indicated that he was aware that the decommissioning issue was the key and said that his National Security Advisor, Mr Sandy Berger, intended to call Mr Trimble during the week and urge him to accept the strategy for dealing with it and to agree to move the talks into substance.
3. The President asked the Taoiseach for his assessment of the chances of a ceasefire by early August. The Taoiseach indicated that he thought they were probably fairly good, provided there was no drifting away from the Mitchell Report's approach to the decommissioning issue. The Taoiseach emphasised the importance of this and indicated that it would make things impossible if Mr Trimble were to demand too much.
4. The Taoiseach expressed appreciation for the help received from all the relevant personnel in the US administration. He also expressed particular appreciation for the contribution and commitment of Senator George Mitchell.
5. President Clinton asked the Taoiseach to contact him if there was anything else the US could do; and looked forward to seeing him soon.

Department of the Taoiseach.

**Note of telephone call between Taoiseach and President Clinton  
on Tuesday, 15 July, 1997**

Taoiseach: Hello.

Clinton: Taoiseach.

Taoiseach: Yes, that's me.

Clinton: It's Bill Clinton, how are you.

Taoiseach: Hello President, how are you.

Clinton: I'm fine, congratulations.

Taoiseach: Thank you very much and very nice to talk to you. How is everything going?

Clinton: Well it's going fine for us here, I think. I just got back from a trip to Europe with the NATO Group and .....

Taoiseach: All went well.

Clinton: It did and I had just a brief moment to speak with Prime Minister Blair about what you're trying to do together to bring about a settlement in Northern Ireland and I wanted to call and just tell you that I remain committed to supporting your efforts.

Taoiseach: I really appreciate that and needless to say, President, I want to thank you for all of your close interest and engagement and as you know from your visit here and all your contacts we have continued to try to get back on to the peace process and to try to get momentum into it and what we have been doing over the last few weeks since we agreed the decommissioning paper, the joint paper - and today we have even made some more progress in London, our officials - in trying to move that forward, we have set ourselves a fairly tight timetable to the end of the month to try to get that and a number of other issues out of the way so that by the end of July when they all break for holidays, that if we can get the break of a ceasefire that we can actually get into the talks on the 15



September. Now it's all tight and there is a whole lot of problems, and a whole lot of things might go right or wrong but at least the two Governments are working well together and with all of the assistance that your people have been giving and all the direction from you, I think we are in as good a position as we have been in for the last 1½ years. Whether its good enough we will just have to wait and see.

Clinton: We will do our best. We know that the decommissioning issue is the key and we will do, Sandy Berger, my National Security Advisor is going to call Trimble this week to urge him to accept the strategy and to agree to move the talks into substance. We have always taken the position that talks that include Sinn Féin have a better chance of long-term success, but I don't know, eventually they are going to have to come back in with a ceasefire. What do you think are the chances of a ceasefire by early August?

Taoiseach: I think it's probably back fairly good providing we can stick to the Mitchell Report on decommissioning because any drifting away from that or any attempt to make the decommissioning issue a mandatory thing and moving it away from being voluntary will fail. No matter what you say or I say or anyone else says, it just won't work because the Loyalists and the Republicans will both say that if the decommissioning issue is not of a voluntary nature in the process of the talks they will pull away from it. But if we can get over that one and I think we have worked out a wording today where both Governments will talk to Trimble tomorrow on it, but if we can hold that line of the Mitchell Report and the voluntary nature of it, I think the chances of a ceasefire are not bad because we have given a number of clarifications to Sinn Féin, the British Government have given a number of clarifications, we have had the means of communications both of us to them, so, I think, if you ask me to put it on the 50/50 line, I would put it on the right side of 50 rather than on the wrong side.

Clinton: That's good, that's the best news I have heard in a while.

Taoiseach: But it just requires this decommissioning thing not to knock us off. Most of the other issues, most of the prisoners, the confidence issues, the clarifications by the British Government, things they want to know about us, they are fairly well out of the way, so I

don't want to simplify it and say it's a one item agenda but it's very much only one big item. The other ones, I think we have understandings enough with Sinn Féin not to create a difficulty. So if we can just move it on that little bit. But all your people have been very very helpful because there was a few hairy weeks there that things could have gone very wrong and I really do appreciate - and poor old George Mitchell, he's turned out a great friend of mine but he's a great man, he has more patience than anybody I ever came across.

Clinton: He was well trained for that, he had to live with the US Senate where they could talk everything to death forever, but he's a good man and he's done a good job, I think.

Taoiseach: We really appreciate you sending him to us, because he is, I think anyone else would either have jumped out the window or gone home and he just has not done that. He has really stuck with it. If we could get to the position of the 15 September at least now the British Government - and I know you've been very instrumental in this - they have fixed the terms of starting, moving into the three way process, having a deadline of May - that may or may not be reached but at least there are parameters there that were not there before and that's extremely helpful.

Clinton: Well, you take care of yourself.

Taoiseach: I certainly will President.

Clinton: Let us know what we can do and if there is anything else we can do, you can call me anytime and our people obviously are in touch all the time but I feel quite hopeful of the energy that you and Blair have put into this and I think we got a shot here, and we just want to be a constructive force.

Taoiseach: I look forward to working with you on it because you know, you have stuck with us from the very start and I appreciate all the chances you have taken along the way and it has been extremely helpful because quite frankly - and I worked with Albert Reynolds back a number a years ago on this and at the start of the process - we would never have managed to hang it on our own together because there will always be that difficulty between ourselves and



Unionists and mistrust and difficulties but both myself and Tony Blair are working together now, we have our people working together now, and I think with all the help from yourselves and if we could just get Trimble not to try to get everything written into stone, because we can actually get into the talks and if he demands too much it will just make it impossible, but other than that one I think we can make it.

Clinton: Well, we'll work on it and we will see you soon, I hope.

Taoiseach: A great honour to talk to you President, look forward to seeing you again.

Clinton: Me too.

Taoiseach: Bye.

Clinton: Bye.

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Taoiseach's meeting with the President, Tuesday, 15 July, 1997

**Talks Process**

The parades issue had the potential to derail the whole talks process. We had contacts with all sides before the marches, including the Garvaghy Road and Lower Ormeau Road residents (on 1 July). At my meeting with the British Prime Minister on Thursday, 3 July, I conveyed our belief that the marches should not be forced on the communities.

I very much welcomed the decision by the Orange Order not to march in Derry, Newry, Armagh and the Lr. Ormeau Rd. This was an extremely courageous decision and we can, perhaps, be more optimistic. Now that the most contentious aspects of the marching season are over, our overriding priority is to press home our shared determination to secure an agreed settlement.

We are determined to press ahead now - hopefully on an all inclusive basis for which, of course, an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire remains necessary - with the commencement of substantive talks. We have a timeframe for Sinn Féin entry and for the talks and we have a joint paper on decommissioning agreed with the British Government. The British Government have provided further clarification to Sinn Féin and we are now, with the British Government, providing clarification to the Ulster Unionist Party. It is essential to maintain consistency in these clarifications.

We are ready to give the present process our best shot and in our public presentations we shall continue to talk of going forward with it. But we cannot with credibility give it much more time. If by mid-September there are continuing problems, we will have to be ready to progress in another way, with the British Government.

**Prospects for an IRA Cessation**

Debate is still continuing within the Republican Movement. They will have to assess the fallout from recent events, but obviously the prospects are better now than they might have been.

Whatever happens - if the talks process moves without Sinn Féin - we will have to keep open the possibility of their joining at a later date.

**Confidence Building**

**Bloody Sunday**



I met with the victims and relatives of victims of Bloody Sunday on 2 July, before my visit to London. I reaffirmed my Government's commitment to support the relatives and their campaign. The Assessment of the new material was submitted to the British Government by the previous Government, towards the end of June. I fully endorse that Assessment. It is extremely thorough and compelling. At my meeting with the relatives, I undertook to raise the issue with the British Prime Minister, which I did, and he said he would respond as quickly as possible. Secretary of State Mowlam has been sympathetic and met the relatives for lunch, when they visited London also on 3 July.

### **Parades**

I said in my statement on last Thursday's Orange Order decisions that their gesture calls for an equally positive response from nationalists. There is a need for constitutional nationalism, North and South, to seize the initiative on this whole issue but we have to consider and move very carefully in this very sensitive area.

With regard to parades next year, while the Parades Commission is to be put on a statutory footing, I think the whole issue may have to be revisited. The Parades Commission got involved in certain areas this year and lost some credibility. It is also the case that each parade cannot be looked at in isolation. What happens on the Garvaghy Road affects Derry and Belfast and elsewhere. The issue will require a lot of thought and careful handling.



**Note on conversation between Taoiseach and President Clinton**

The Taoiseach had a brief discussion with President Clinton by telephone this afternoon. They reviewed developments in the peace process and discussed the ongoing multi-party talks in Northern Ireland and in particular the efforts that are being made to achieve inclusive negotiations on the basis of an unequivocal ceasefire.

President Clinton told the Taoiseach that he was delighted that the new British and Irish Governments were working so well together and he committed himself to working with them in the pursuit of peace in Northern Ireland.

15 July 1997

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