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**Report of Meeting between the Taoiseach, Mr John Bruton and the
British Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, United Nations, New York,
Monday, 23 June, 1997**

1. The meeting took place at 11am, at short notice, on the initiative of the British side - Mr John Holmes of No 10 Downing Street approached the Irish delegation shortly after 10am to convey the Prime Minister's suggestion for the meeting. The Taoiseach was accompanied by Ambassador John Campbell, Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the undersigned. With Mr Blair were Mr John Holmes and other British officials. The meeting lasted about 30 minutes.

2. In advance of the meeting, the undersigned had spoken by 'phone to Mr Séan O hÚiginn, Second Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs about up-to-date developments on the proposed joint paper of the two Governments on decommissioning, which at that stage, had not been finally signed off on as agreed. I had been told, and conveyed to the Taoiseach before the meeting with Mr Blair, that at the beginning of that day, there was disagreement on only one point in the paper - the wording of the final phrase in the final sentence of paragraph of the draft 'Possible Conclusions'; that early that morning Secretary of State Mowlam had telephoned the Tánaiste to say that, in the British view retention of their proposed wording was essential if there was to be any prospect of getting the Official Unionists to sign up to the paper; that the Tánaiste had indicated a disposition to accept the British wording subject to receiving firm assurances on both the deployment of the paper in the multi-party talks on a, broadly, take-it-or-leave-it basis and also on the readiness of the British to stand shoulder to shoulder with us if, say, at the first two-month review Mr Trimble sought to bring the talks to a halt on the basis that there had, by then, been insufficient progress on decommissioning; and that the Tánaiste was to speak by phone to the Secretary of State later in the day. It had been suggested to me that the Taoiseach might, at the meeting with the Prime Minister, rehearse this sequence of events and indicate that our final position would be conveyed later in the day to Ms Mowlam. I so suggested to the Taoiseach. I also brought him up to date on where matters stood as regards finalising and conveying the Government's assessment of the new material on Bloody Sunday to the British Government and suggested he inform Mr Blair that it would be transmitted to him in the next day or two.

3. When the meeting commenced, the Taoiseach immediately referred to the position reached on the decommissioning paper, with particular reference to the disagreement that had been outstanding between the two Governments. The Taoiseach said that the Irish Government was now prepared to accept the British wording on the point on which there had been disagreement subject to our being given satisfactory assurances as to the British being ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with if Mr Trimble sought to use the reviews to bring the talks to a halt. Mr Blair reacted with satisfaction, noting that the decommissioning paper was now fully agreed between the two Governments and could be tabled in the talks, following their resumption next day.
4. The Taoiseach went on to refer to the new material on Bloody Sunday that had come out arising from the twenty-fifth anniversary, to his meetings with relatives of the victims, to their continuing sense of loss and of hurt and to the assessment prepared by officials of the Irish Government which was now ready to be handled to the British within the next day or so. He recalled that Mr Blair's predecessor, Mr Major, had said to him, in conversations, that the British Government would look at the assessment with an open mind. Prime Minister Blair said that would be in line with the position on Bloody Sunday that had been taken by the new Labour Government. He sought, and received, confirmation of this from Mr John Holmes.
5. The Taoiseach enquired whether, as he understood, it was Mr Blair's intention to make a statement on Northern Ireland in the House of Commons later in the week. The Prime Minister confirmed that such a statement was to be made on Wednesday, 25 June. He added that the British