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Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

2 February, 1998.

Mr. Dermot Gallagher,
Second Secretary,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

President: General Permission to Leave the State for Private Visits to Northern Ireland

Dear Dermot,

Please find attached a copy of a decision made by the Government at their meeting last week on this topic.

By way of background I should say that the suggestion for such a decision came from the Government themselves (rather than from the President). The text of the decision was agreed with the President on the basis of a draft received from the Attorney General's Office, in advance of the matter being raised at Government.

You will note the arrangements envisaged for visits in this category. We will be guided by your Department as regards the general political and security situation as mentioned in the text of the decision.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Murray,
Secretary General to the Government.

Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.
Government Buildings, Dublin 2.

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S.21075D

28 Eanáir, 1998.

Rúnaí an Uachtaráin

I am to inform you that, at a meeting held today, the Government, in accordance with Article 12.9 of the Constitution,

(1) consented to the President, Mary McAleese, leaving the State for the purpose of visiting Northern Ireland where such visits are exclusively of a private character arising from the President's family ties there, on the understanding that

- the Taoiseach, through the Secretary to the Government, will be notified in advance of the duration and purpose of each such visit and of any modification proposed thereto,

- the general political and security situation permits the visit,

- the detailed arrangements will continue to be made by the Department of the Taoiseach in accordance with the usual practice for Presidential visits to Northern Ireland,

- the consent of the Government will be sought in the usual way in respect of the leaving of the State by the President for a visit involving any other purpose; and

(2) decided that this arrangement is entered into without prejudice to the Government's right to review it at any time, and without prejudice to the right of the Government in respect of any particular visit which has been notified to the Taoiseach and the Secretary of the Government to withdraw the consent in that particular case.

Frank Murray
Ard-Rúnaí an Rialtais

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