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Summary of Meeting with Martin McGuinness and Aidan McAteer

Dublin, 3 May 1999

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1. Paddy Teahon, Tim Dalton and the undersigned met Martin McGuinness and Aidan McAteer at Dublin Airport on Monday morning. McGuinness was on his way to Washington for a short visit, designed to lobby the White House to pressurise London to get the institutions up and running at the earliest possible date.

2. McGuinness said that Gerry Adams had spoken to Jonathan Powell in No. 10 that morning, who in turn had been speaking over the weekend to David Trimble. Powell said Trimble was in the ballpark but only for the establishment of institutions in shadow form. Trimble's position was that decommissioning would have to take place before full powers were devolved to the Executive. The question of the other institutions meeting during this shadow period was open for negotiation.

IRA Statement

3. Referring to our discussion with Adams on Saturday, McGuinness said that the situation was so bad on the ground that an IRA statement was "highly problematical". On the other hand, he had been toying over the weekend with a possible Sinn Féin statement. This would deal positively with the ability of all participants to deliver on their commitments, and it would "add a new dimension which might catch Blair's imagination".

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4. As in the Adams discussion on Saturday, we said we would have to see the words of any Sinn Féin statement before making a judgement, but essentially we believed an IRA statement was required. Apart from anything else, it was necessary to ensure that any Sinn Féin commitment would not be undermined by the actual IRA position. McGuinness replied that, as of now, such a statement was impossible, even if it did the trick. However, in a significant (and encouraging) intervention, McAteer seemed to suggest that, in the right circumstances, an IRA statement might not be completely out of the question, remarking that "Gerry won't push, unless it has the desired effect".

5. McGuinness turned to the question of whether the British were serious about moving ahead, given the continuing leaks about a shadow period between now and September. He emphasised that there needed to be certainty that the British wanted the institutions up and running within two weeks. Otherwise, Sinn Féin could not stretch people to the limit. To do so in the absence of this certainty, would only make matters worse.

6. In response to our renewed emphasis on the need for an IRA statement, McAteer again said that Sinn Féin would be morally obliged to pass on our thinking. The key point was that Sinn Féin had to know from the British "on what basis the institutions are deliverable", adding that this needed to be conveyed directly to Gerry Adams by the Prime Minister.

7. We agreed to stay closely in touch, given in particular our on-going discussions with the British on the way forward, including a likely further, early phone call between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister.

DAR.

Dermot Gallagher

4 May 1999

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