

[Passed by R. O'Higgins on 24.9.9

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1. The Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister acknowledge that the most urgent and important issue facing the people of Ireland, North and South, and the British and Irish Governments together, is to remove the causes of conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions which have resulted, recognising that the absence of a lasting and satisfactory settlement of relationships between the peoples of both islands has contributed to continuing tragedy and suffering.
2. They consider that the development of the European Community, in which both countries are partners, fundamentally changes the nature and the context of British-Irish relationships and will progressively remove the basis of the historic conflict still taking place in Northern Ireland. The challenges and opportunities of the European Single Market will, of themselves, require new approaches to serve interests common to both parts of Ireland.
3. The Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister are convinced of the inestimable value to both their peoples of healing divisions in Ireland and of ending a conflict which has been so manifestly to the detriment of all. Both recognise that the ending of divisions can come about only through the agreement and cooperation of the people, North and South, representing both traditions in Ireland. They therefore make a solemn commitment to promote cooperation at all levels. It is their aim to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing the whole island and its relations with the neighbouring island.
4. The Prime Minister reiterates on behalf of the British Government that they have no selfish strategic political or economic interest in Northern Ireland.

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Their primary interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among all the people who inhabit the island, and they will work together with the Irish Government to achieve such an agreement, which will embrace the totality of relationships. They acknowledge the legitimacy of any form of self-determination for Ireland as a whole which is freely agreed on the basis of consent, North and South, of the people living in Ireland. They accept that such agreement may, as of right, take the form of agreed independent structures for the island as a whole. They reaffirm as a binding obligation that they will, for their part, introduce the necessary legislation to give effect to this, or to any measure of agreement on future relationships in Ireland which the people living in Ireland may themselves freely and collectively determine without external impediment and on a basis of joint North-South consent. The role of the British Government will be to encourage, assist and enable such agreement over a period through a process of dialogue and cooperation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland. They believe that the people of Britain would wish, in friendship to all sides, to encourage the people of Ireland to reach agreement on how they may live together in unity and harmony and in partnership, with respect for their diverse traditions and with full recognition of the special links and the unique relationship which exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

5. The Taoiseach, on behalf of the Irish Government, considers that the lessons of Irish history, and especially of Northern Ireland, show that stability and well-being will not be found under any political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on grounds of identity by a significant minority of those governed by it. He accepts, on behalf of the Irish Government, that the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with the agreement and consent of the people of

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Northern Ireland and must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities.

6. The Irish Government accordingly commit themselves to working in the spirit and on the basis of the Report of the New Ireland Forum to create institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest. This will help over a period to build the trust necessary to end past divisions, leading to an agreed and peaceful future. Such structures would, of course, include institutional recognition of the special links that exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland as part of the totality of relationships, while taking account of newly forged links with the rest of Europe.

7. In the light of their joint commitment to promote the foregoing objectives, the Taoiseach has indicated to the British Prime Minister his intention of establishing a permanent Irish Convention to consult and advise on the steps required to remove the barriers of distrust which at present divide the people of Ireland and which stand in the way of the exercise in common by them of self-determination on a basis of equality. It will be open to the Convention to make recommendations on ways in which agreement, as defined in the Forum Report, and respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland, can be promoted and established. The Convention will be governed by the authority of Bunreacht na hEireann, and the institutions established under it. It will be a fundamental guiding principle of the Convention that all differences between the Irish people relating to the exercise in common of the right to self-determination will be resolved exclusively by peaceful, political means.

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- 8. The Convention will be open to all democratically mandated political parties in Ireland which abide exclusively by the democratic process and wish to share in dialogue about Ireland's political future and the welfare of all its people.

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE (JDI): MEETING WITH MR O'NEILL
24 SEPTEMBER 1993

It was envisaged at Sir Robin Butler's most recent meeting with Mr Nally that alongside the work the Liaison Group was tasked by the Anglo-Irish JOC to undertake on forming a joint assessment of an acceptable outcome from the talks process, the two sides should continue an exploration of principles and language relevant to the Joint Declaration Initiative. The Liaison Group as a whole is to meet in Dublin on 1 October. In preparation for this meeting Mr O'Neill and I met in London on 24 September. Our discussion on overt political development is recorded in more detail separately. The main transaction was that I gave Mr O'Neill a first draft of the Joint Framework Document, as approved by the Secretary of State, and made it clear that we hoped for a very early start to the forthcoming meeting of the Liaison Group. I was ready to have an intensive series of meetings thereafter as was needed to enable us to report jointly to the JOC scheduled for 27 October.

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2. In fact most of our discussion was focussed on the Joint Declaration Initiative. Mr O'Neill presented me with a new text (attached marked JDI). As recorded below, we had a full if on my part necessarily off-the-cuff and without commitment, discussion of the text, focussed on the crucial paragraph 4.

3. In presenting the paper Mr O'Neill made the following points:

- (i) this new text had been seen and approved by