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DFA/5

Department of Foreign Affairs

The following statement was issued today by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Taoiseach:

I have decided to accept, without preconditions, the invitation from the British Prime Minister to have another meeting with him soon at which Mr. Brian Faulkner will also be present.

I am confident that the Irish public will support me in this decision. We all realise that death, injury and destruction in the North harm the nation and deepen divisions among the Irish people. I intend to continue to do all that lies in my power to bring about conditions in the North which might open a door to easement of fear and distrust.

It is right for me to have discussions with the elected representatives of the non-unionist community in the North. As present circumstances prevent them from participating in discussions elsewhere it becomes all the more incumbent on me to seek to find progress through political means. It is also, therefore, right for me to have discussions with Mr. Heath and the elected leader of the Northern majority.

The better future of the Irish nation requires the encouragement of every sign of understanding and goodwill. This accords with the aspiration of the majority of the Irish people who, themselves, seek the unity of the nation, by agreement, through peaceful means. I have said before that this aspiration represents no threat to the legitimate demands of the Northern majority. I repeat that today.