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FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE
27 JUNE 1991

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Pilling - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr McNeill - B
Mr Cooke - B
Mr Pope - B

MR D J R HILL - B

as Mr Hill

MEETING BETWEEN DR ALDERDICE AND SECRETARY OF STATE

Dr Alderdice called on the Secretary of State at 5.15 pm on Monday 24 June 1991. Dr Mawhinney, Mr Fell, Mr Pilling and I were also present.

2. The Secretary of State said that the Unionist leaders, whom he had just seen, wanted it made clear that they had not been seeing the Secretary of State about resumption of talks after 16 July. While there had been no discussion with the Unionist leaders about the issue as such, he had set out HMG's position. The fact was that holding an IGC on 16 July was an integral part of the deal with the Irish Government that had been struck in order to meet the Unionists pre-conditions. The 26 March document meant precisely what it said: the talks would take place between two pre-determined dates. Having given his commitment to a participant, he could not now break his word, even if he wanted to, else it would not be trusted by other participants in the process. For their part, the Unionists had stood by their position not to resume the talks after 16 July.

3. Continuing, the Secretary of State said that he had made it clear to the Unionists that there was no basis for the allegations that HMG was considering the possibilities in relation to Sinn Fein and the talks. There was a difference of opinion between the Unionists and HMG in that Dr Paisley vowed that he would never

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talk to Sinn Fein, except if they had eschewed violence for a very considerable period, such as the Workers' Party had, whereas HMG might be prepared to do so if the IRA had conclusively laid down its arms. Dr Paisley's view was that HMG had been in touch with Sinn Fein and he had proof of this.

4. Dr Alderdice asked whether the Unionists had reiterated that the holding of an IGC on 16 July would be the end of the talks. Dr Mawhinney responded that the talks would finish a week earlier because of the need to re-activate the Secretariat at Maryfield to prepare for the IGC. Mr Pilling added that the precise time before the IGC when the talking would have to stop was related to the Secretary of State's decision as to when Maryfield would begin preparing for the conference as the Unionists would refuse to talk during that time. Dr Alderdice recalled that everyone had previously understood that the date for the IGC had been fixed. One of the difficulties was of course that it was impossible to predict in advance how talks would progress in terms of time.

5. Dr Alderdice said that his immediate concern was with the next steps in the process. The Secretary of State responded that after the clarification of initial positions, consideration would have to be given as to whether the best way ahead would still be to enter into debate about the various issues that had been raised. It was conceivable that Mr Hume might take the view that another problem had arisen between the Unionists and the Government, and that he would stay away until it had been sorted out. No attempt had been made at this stage to suggest a way out of the difficulty. Indeed, this would be more difficult now that Mr Mallon had said to the media that the Unionists should not be taken seriously. Dr Alderdice wondered whether it would be worthwhile to try to establish the prospect that, after an appropriate time had elapsed, a further break in the conferences should be negotiated to enable the participants in the talks to get down to business. The Secretary of State replied that Dr Alderdice's suggestion was one of several possibilities, which might have to be explored with the Irish Government in due course.

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6. The meeting ended at 5.30 pm.

Signed.

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27 June 1991

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