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to Mr Barry
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Note of meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Mr Jim Steinberg of the NSC 24 September 1998

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Present: Irish side: Minister Andrews, Secretary Gallagher and the undersigned
US side: Mr Steinberg, Mr Butler.

1. Mr Steinberg welcomed the Minister (mentioning that he had already met earlier that day with the Russian and Hungarian Foreign Ministers and the Saudi Crown Prince).
2. The Minister gave an account of his meetings on the Hill earlier that day. He went on to detail the current state of the peace-process, including the "stand-off" as between decommissioning and the formation of the Shadow Executive. He outlined the nature of the constraints on Mr Trimble and Mr Adams. The solution was not yet obvious but the Minister stressed the determination of the two Governments to find one, and the various contacts which the Irish Government was having with the British Government and political leaders to advance this goal. He asked the US Administration in any contacts they had with Mr Trimble or Mr Adams to urge them to get on with the agenda of the Agreement. He mentioned that Mr Mallon had earlier in the day made a statement calling essentially for everyone to get off the fence and down to business, a call supported, interestingly, by Billy Hutchinson.
3. Sec Gallagher amplified his understanding of Mr Mallon's statement which essentially called for everyone to move so that the Shadow Executive was not blocked indefinitely and Sinn Féin did not make 'a running sore' of the decommissioning issue. He stressed the need to buy time and create space for movement. It would be

very important also to create the right climate through various confidence-building measures. He listed a number of ideas being looked at in this regard in the Government's internal reflections or in private dialogue.

4. Mr Steinberg questioned whether there had been any success on our discussions with Sinn Féin on their approach to decommissioning. The Minister listed the steps they had taken (the appointment of Mr Martin McGuinness etc) but also the constraints on them. He had personally often wondered why the IRA could not itself destroy some of its "dumps" in a way that gave everyone the right message. Any Sinn Féin resiling from the commitment of the Agreement would be disastrous.
5. Secretary Gallagher said we should all seek to persuade the political leaders to "cool it" in terms of their public statements, which were reciprocally increasing the pressures on each other, and to revert to private dialogue for the necessary "choreography".
6. The Minister for Foreign Affairs encouraged the Administration to continue its positive engagement and paid a warm tribute to President Clinton's role, which he had saluted publicly in his UNGA speech. He had been pleased also at the many references to Northern Ireland in the President's speech. Irish people were deeply grateful to and supportive of the President. Mr Steinberg expressed his appreciation for these sentiments. He enquired about further meetings with or between the parties to resolve the impasse, mentioning he himself would be seeing Mr John Holmes in London next week. Mr Butler enquired about the firmness of the October 31st deadline. The Minister underlined the dangers of failing to meet the agreed deadlines (particularly in terms of Sinn Féin, for whom it was crucial that their followers could

see that commitments of the Agreement were being fulfilled). Mr Steinberg reflected that a month was a long time in politics and recalled the various issues in the run-up to the Agreement which had gone to the brink but had been successfully resolved. The discussion closed with a shared sense that with work and determination this difficulty would also be overcome.

7. The meeting concluded with a light-hearted exchange between the Minister and Mr Steinberg on fly-fishing and Mr Steinberg's angling experiences in Ireland.
8. Earlier the Minister had informed Mr Larry Butler of the concerns voiced by Mr Gilman and others on the failure to regularise the status of the deportees and enquired whether something could be done. Mr Butler repeated the Administration view that legislation would be necessary, and that the initiative therefore lay largely with Congress itself.

Sean O'Huiginn
25 September 1998