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## **Statement by the Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, following Meeting with UK Prime Minister Theresa May, Tuesday 26 July 2016**

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I join with Prime Minister May in offering my condolences to the French people following events in Northern France this morning.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the Prime Minister, Theresa May, on her recent appointment. It is, of course, a great personal achievement and comes at a time of many challenges.

We had a very good meeting today and I am delighted that we have agreed to work together to build on the continuing strength and closeness of the UK/Ireland relationship.

I look forward to working closely with the Prime Minister on the many issues where we share a mutual interest.

We had a good discussion today on the good progress that our two Governments have made in recent years following on from the Joint Statement "British Irish relations – the next decade" which was agreed in 2012.

I am delighted that Prime Minister May has affirmed the UK Government's commitment to this comprehensive programme of engagement between our two administrations. This will allow us to continue to work together on a range of issues that are of benefit to all the people of Britain and Ireland such as jobs, trade, tourism and energy as part of our Joint Ireland/UK Work Programme.

Today's meeting also gave us the opportunity to discuss developments in Northern Ireland. We reiterated the importance of the partnership between our two Governments in supporting the peace process and in contributing to stability and continued progress in Northern Ireland. We are both committed to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and successor agreements - St Andrew's and Fresh Start - and will continue to work in partnership for a prosperous and secure Northern Ireland.

We also discussed the many issues that arise in the context of the outcome of the recent UK referendum on EU membership. While it is not the outcome that we in Ireland wanted, we fully respect the democratic vote of the people of the United Kingdom. We will work with the Prime Minister and all our partners in the EU and in the Northern Ireland Executive to make sure we achieve the best possible outcome in forthcoming negotiations.

We agreed that we would work together to ensure that the benefits of the peace process are preserved in any new arrangements which might emerge regarding the United Kingdom's future relationship with the EU.

In particular, we both recognised that Ireland is the only EU Member State that shares a land border with the UK. We are in agreement that we don't wish to see any return to the borders of the past on the island of Ireland.

Today's meeting also gave us the opportunity to have a broader discussion on the common issues of concern in the context of the referendum result such as our close trading relationship and the benefits of the Common Travel Area.

For our part, we have already made very clear our view Ireland is very much committed to staying in the EU. We want the upcoming negotiation process to end with a prosperous and outward-looking UK which retains a close relationship with the EU. This is in all of our interests.

Neither I nor the Prime Minister are in any doubt about the complexities of the negotiations that lie ahead of us all, nor do we underestimate the importance of the issues involved for all of our citizens. But we face the future together in the knowledge that relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom have never been better and that spirit of partnership and friendship will guide all of our work together in the time ahead.

ENDS