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REMARKS BY TAOISEACH AT THE WHITE HOUSE

ON 17 MARCH 1986

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be here to meet President Reagan at the White House on St Patrick's Day, a day when all those who are Irish or of Irish origin remember their heritage with fondness and pride. I am particularly pleased to be here today because the year since St Patrick's Day of 1985 has been an historic one for efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to Northern Ireland.

In November 1985, the British and Irish Governments signed an agreement with the aim of the creation in Northern Ireland of a society in which all may live in peace, free from discrimination and intolerance, and with the opportunity for both communities to participate fully in the structures and processes of government. Being here today gives me the opportunity to thank you personally for the support which you, Mr President, together with Speaker O'Neill, showed for our efforts on the day of the Agreement's signature. Steadfast support in Congress and in the Administration for the work of finding a framework whereby the two communities in Northern Ireland can work towards mutual accommodation, based on recognition and acceptance of each other's rights, has been a source of great encouragement to the Irish Government.

We have seen in recent weeks the U S Administration make proposals for the provision of financial assistance towards the International Reconstruction Fund to be established under the terms of the Agreement, and that you are currently working with Congress on the detailed composition of such assistance. We are greatly heartened by such a gesture which can provide an economic basis for the improvement of living conditions and employment opportunities in areas which have suffered the most as a result of the violence in recent years. I know that many Irish Americans care deeply about the welfare of their ancestral homeland and wish to make a tangible contribution towards the peaceful resolution of its most complex problem. U S financial assistance will represent a measurable commitment to a process designed to bring about substantial progress towards the goal of reconciliation within the island of Ireland.

Mr President, I know too that you share a strong attachment to your Irish-American heritage and have frequently paid tribute to the sons and daughters of Ireland who came to this nation in decades past, and who contributed so greatly to its development. 1986 is, as we know, the centennial year for that great symbol of the U S, the Statue of Liberty, which greeted so many immigrants and which is now, after some years of work, almost completely restored. In commemoration of such a centenary year, I would like to present to you (on behalf of the people of Ireland,) a gift to the people of the United States of a Waterford crystal representation of the Statue of Liberty. I understand that a museum has been created to commemorate

the Statue and it is our hope that they will be able to accommodate this gift which seeks to recognise the deep significance of this historic landmark for so many of my fellow countrymen and their descendants.

In closing, Mr President, it is of course our tradition each St Patrick's Day to make a presentation to you of shamrock from Ireland. The shamrock has long been a symbol associated with my country and is worn with pride both at home and abroad on this day as we celebrate the feast of our patron saint. Accordingly, it is my very great pleasure to present to you, Mr President, this bowl of shamrock, grown in Ireland, and in so doing to wish a very happy St Patrick's Day to both you and Nancy.

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