

THE  
IRAQ  
INQUIRY

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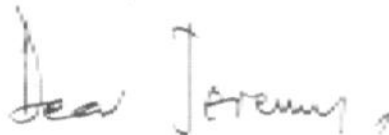
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Committee: Sir John Chilcot (Chairman)  
Sir Lawrence Freedman  
Sir Martin Gilbert  
Sir Roderic Lyne  
Baroness Usha Prashar

Sir Jeremy Heywood  
Cabinet Secretary  
70 Whitehall  
SW1A 2AS

28 May 2014



I am pleased to record that we have now reached agreement on the principles that will underpin disclosure of material from Cabinet-level discussions and communications between the UK Prime Minister and the President of the United States which the Inquiry has asked to use in its report.

I appreciate that the Inquiry's requests for disclosure raised difficult issues of long-standing principle, which have taken some months to resolve: recognition of the wholly exceptional nature of this Inquiry has allowed that to happen. My colleagues and I judge that this material is vital to the public understanding of the Inquiry's conclusions.

Earlier this year we reached agreement on the principles for disclosure of material from the records of Cabinet-level discussions. We have now reached agreement on the detail of what the Inquiry will release in relation to more than 200 Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings. That includes agreement to publish a small number of full extracts from the minutes of those meetings we judge to be most critical, alongside the Inquiry's final report.

When Sir Gus O'Donnell wrote to the Inquiry in January 2011 he made clear that there was no prospect of reaching agreement that Notes from Mr Blair or records of discussions between the UK Prime Minister and the President of the United States should be disclosed in their entirety, even with redactions. Accordingly, the requests submitted by the Inquiry last summer were for permission to disclose quotes or gists of the content. We have concluded that they are sufficient to explain our conclusions.

When the Inquiry requested gists and quotes from 25 Notes from Mr Blair to President Bush and more than 130 records of conversations, in July and August 2013, it also identified some potential gaps in the material provided which the Government has now addressed, including with some material received by the Inquiry very recently.

Following our recent agreement on the principles for disclosure of material describing communication between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States, detailed consideration of the gists and quotes requested by the Inquiry has now begun. Consideration will be based on the principle that our use of this material should not reflect President Bush's views. We have also agreed that the use of direct quotation from the documents should be the minimum necessary to enable the Inquiry to articulate its conclusions. It is not yet clear how long detailed consideration of these gists and quotes will take but the Inquiry and the Government should work to complete this task as soon as possible.

The Inquiry will then be in a position to notify relevant individuals when the next phase of Maxwellisation will be able to start. Maxwellisation remains a confidential process; the Inquiry does not intend to make public the specific details of timing, content or recipients. The Maxwellisation process will reflect our judgement of what is necessary to ensure that Maxwellees are treated in a fair and reasonable manner and will influence the Inquiry's overall timescale.

It is our intention to submit the Inquiry's report to the Prime Minister as soon as possible. I am grateful for your assurance that you will do everything possible to assist us in doing so.

I should like to place a copy of this letter on the Inquiry's website on Thursday 29 May.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Chilcot', written in a cursive style.

**Sir John Chilcot**