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THE PRIME MINISTER

17 June 2009

Dear Sir John

I would like to thank you for agreeing to Chair the Iraq Inquiry. As I said in Parliament, I believe this Inquiry will, through lessons learned, strengthen our diplomacy, our military and our democracy. I am fully committed to a thorough and independent inquiry, and guarantee the full co-operation of the Government. As Privy Counsellors, you will have unhindered access to government documents. I have written to all relevant current and former Ministers to underline the importance of their full cooperation. And the Cabinet Secretary is writing to departments to underline the need for full transparency,

It is essential that all those appearing before the Inquiry do so with the greatest possible candour and openness, and that the Inquiry itself proceeds as efficiently as possible, while maintaining full public confidence in the integrity of the process and without in any way damaging national security. Once you have met, as I have suggested, the Leaders of the other political parties and the Chairs of the relevant parliamentary Select Committees it would be helpful if you could set out how you and your colleagues think these objectives can best be met in the way that the Inquiry is conducted.

I hope as part of this that you will consider whether it is possible for there to be a process whereby they give their contributions on oath.

It is also essential that the families of those who gave their lives in Iraq are properly consulted on the nature of the inquiry. I hope therefore that you will be able to meet them as part of the preparations and as you continue your work, to explain how you are proceeding. This could be, at their request, in public or private.

Once you have established your plans in more detail, I would encourage you to hold an open session to explain in greater depth the significant scope and breadth of the inquiry

I wish you and your Committee well with your important task, and look forward to your conclusions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon". The letters are bold and slightly slanted, with a cursive-like flow.

The Right Honourable Sir John Chilcot GCB