

From: The Rt Hon Sir John Chilcot GCB

To: The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

21 June 2009

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 17 June about the Iraq Inquiry. I am grateful for your assurance of the Government's commitment to a thorough and independent inquiry, and for the steps that have already been taken with former and current Ministers, and Departments, to ensure full cooperation, transparency and access to government documents. I welcome the fact that I and my colleagues are free to decide independently how best to fulfil our remit.

I am for my part wholly committed to the search for the lessons to be learned for the future from events and experience of the last seven and more years, to uphold the integrity of the process of inquiry and the need to ensure public confidence in it, and to ensure complete candour and openness from witnesses while protecting national security. I will indeed, as you suggest, examine how best, given the non-judicial nature of the Inquiry, a formal undertaking can be given by witnesses that their contributions will be complete, truthful and accurate.

If a judicial inquiry, or a statutory Tribunal of Inquiry, had been established, then I would not have been asked to take on this responsibility. That would have required an extended process, with legal representation for the tribunal, witnesses, and other interested parties. That is not what we have been asked to conduct. To find without extended delay the key lessons for the future from the Iraq experience is however something I believe is well worthwhile.

I have as you suggested begun a process of consultation with the Leaders of the main Opposition parties, and with the Chairs of the relevant Parliamentary Select Committees (Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Public Administration as well as the Intelligence and Security Committee). I see this as helping the Inquiry to decide how best we can structure our procedures to fulfil our remit and meet the objectives we have been set. When these consultations have been completed, I expect to be in a position, having taken them fully into account, to say in more detail how we will propose to take the Inquiry forward.

As part of that, it will, I wholeheartedly agree, be essential to ensure that the families of those who gave their lives in Iraq, or were seriously affected by the conflict, have an early opportunity to express their views about the nature and procedures of the

