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STATEMENT OF MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO

“This is a deeply emotional day – for the Garner Family, and all New Yorkers. His death was a terrible tragedy that no family should have to endure. This is a subject that is never far from my family’s minds – or our hearts. And Eric Garner’s death put a spotlight on police-community relations and civil rights – some of most critical issues our nation faces today.

“Today’s outcome is one that many in our city did not want. Yet New York City owns a proud and powerful tradition of expressing ourselves through non-violent protest. We trust that those unhappy with today’s grand jury decision will make their views known in the same peaceful, constructive way. We all agree that demonstrations and free speech are valuable contributions to debate, and that violence and disorder are not only wrong – but hurt the critically important goals we are trying to achieve together.

“These goals – of bringing police and community closer together and changing the culture of law enforcement - are why we have introduced so many reforms this year. It starts at the top with Commissioner Bratton - a strong, proven change agent. We have dramatically reduced the overuse and abuse of stop-and-frisk. We have initiated a comprehensive plan to retrain the entire NYPD to reduce the use of excessive force and to work with the community. We have changed our marijuana policy to reduce low-level arrests, and we have launched a new pilot program for body cameras for officers to improve transparency and accountability.

“These are the long term reforms we are making to ensure we don’t endure tragedies like this one again in the future. But we also know that this chapter is not yet complete. The grand jury is but one part of the process. There will still be an NYPD internal investigation. And we know the US Attorney is continuing her investigation. Should the federal government choose to act, we stand ready to cooperate.

“Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – one of our nation’s most profound thinkers on these issues – taught us something very simple: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” The problem of police-community relations and civil rights is not just an issue for people of color – or young people – or people who get stopped by police. This is a fundamental issue for every American who cares about justice.

“All of us must work together to make this right – to work for justice – and to build the kind of city – and nation – we need to be.”

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