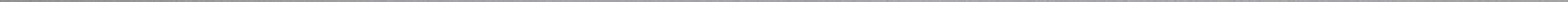
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There have been important developments in respect of the Joint Declaration since we exchanged letters in September. The further work between officials on the background to the proposal, and your own refinements to a possible text made in the light of this, have clearly brought matters to the point of decision.

- 2. At the same time the public demarche by John Hume and Adams on 25 September, and the attendant publicity about aspects of their different but, as I understand it, closely related proposal have complicated matters considerably. The public trailing of possible elements of the scheme, including in particular the references to self-determination for the people of Ireland, have not helped our task. The interest and indeed concern in Northern Ireland in particular has been intense and, whatever the outcome of the Joint Declaration Initiative, both Patrick Mayhew and I are clear that early steps may be needed to reassure public opinion, and to demonstrate to the Unionists in particular that their interests have not been overlooked.
- 3. Against the difficult background created by the Hume/Adams demarche, I have been especially grateful to you for the efforts you and your Government have made to manage and contain the situation. I am sure, without that, we should have been left



compatible and

that it is not expected that Sinn Fein would secure, or expect, immediate talks with the British Government.

- 5. The text which you have canvassed is close to being acceptable to the British Government, against the background of the understandings mentioned above. There is however one significant change which would be needed before I could be party to it. As officials have foreshadowed, I believe that a statement of this kind could only properly be given if it were to include an explicit reference to the "constitutional guarantee" that Northern Ireland's status as part of the the UK will not change without the consent of a majority of its people. A similar statement was, as you know, included in the agreed statement of 26 March 1991 founding the talks process. This is the fundament of our policy in respect of Northern Ireland. Its inclusion would reflect what is for us a constitutional reality, the basis of our policy and a political imperative. The amendments marked on paragraph 4 of the text attached show how this might be done. (As you will see we also propose the deletion of the words "freely and collectively" at the point marked.)
- 6. Your officials have made clear that, while you fully understand and accept our position on the constitutional

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made in parallel with the Joint Declaration.

- 7. I am in no position to challenge your judgement on saleability, and it must be for you to decide whether that should be tested. It is relevant that Adams and his associates would not be party to the Declaration; that it does contain forward language on self-determination and other matters; and that the Convention would provide the Provisionals with a route to constitutional politics, if they wish to take it.
- 8. However I should be clear that my insistence on the inclusion of the constitutional guarantee is not made with the purpose of bringing this initiative to an end. It is rather that it would wrong and misleading for the Declaration to be made in a way which left any doubt on this point. As I have said, it reflects a constitutional reality, the basis of our policy and a political imperative. Its inclusion is necessary for domestic opinion. But its omission would in my judgement be dangerous. There must be no misunderstanding of this point, not only by Adams and his associates, but by the Loyalist paramilitaries and the constitutional politicians of Northern

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different terms, the British Government is guilty of duplicity.

- 9. If, as I hope, this initiative prospers, we shall need to consult closely on handling, timing and modalities. Sir Robin Butler and other officials stand ready to work closely with their opposite numbers on these matters.
- 10. If, on the other hand, it is your judgement, in the light of what I have said, that matters cannot be brought to a successful conclusion I hope the two sides can continue to co-operate closely in bringing matters to an end. This will not be easy for any of us given the Hume/Adams demarche, and the public interest and apprehensions which it has excited. It is obviously important that our own close relations should not be damaged, and we share too an interest in maintaining the credibility and standing of John Hume and the other constitutional nationalists in Northern Ireland.