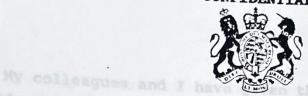
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## 10 DOWNING STREET LONDON SWIA 2AA is, at present, impossible to do so. I very much hope that you

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13 March 1991

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I know that you have taken a great personal interest in the lengthy discussions which Peter Brooke, Gerry Collins and the leaders of the four main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland have been holding over the last fourteen months. I am grateful for the timely interventions by which you have, on several occasions, cleared the way for further progress.

Peter discussed this with Gerry Collins on 11 March. common ground that we need before long to bring matters to a resolution, and that we should aim to do this before the next Inter-Governmental Conference, which it is now envisaged will take place on 9 April. It was also accepted that we should seek to avoid a situation in which your Government was invited to agree to a text which the Northern Ireland parties would subsequently be free to amend or reject. In the light of this discussion and recent contacts with all concerned Peter has now prepared a text for a statement which represents his own best judgement of what would be a basis for talks that safeguards the genuine concerns of the potential participants including, of course, your own Government. Nearly all of the substance and much of the language of this document will already be familiar to you; it draws directly from the extremely helpful draft which your Government put forward on 6 February; elements owe their provenance to Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley and to Mr Hume and his colleagues. It aims to provide a basis on which all the parties can move forward into the three strands of substantive talks.

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My colleagues and I have given this matter our most careful consideration. We conclude that we have reached the point where we should either proceed to formal talks, or acknowledge that it is, at present, impossible to do so. I very much hope that you will share our view that the document adequately accommodates the essential principles of all concerned. I believe that it provides a good basis from which talks comprising all three elements identified in the paper can be successfully launched. These could provide the framework for the development of new and imaginative thinking such as you referred to in your speech on 9 March. They offer the means by which all might agree to a strengthening of the democratic procedures that all see as desirable. That is why I am writing personally to commend to you and to your colleagues the document which Peter has prepared and to seek your continued support.

The document will be sent to the four party leaders on Thursday 14 March so that it reaches them simultaneously. I should be most grateful if you would preserve the confidentiality of this communication at least until that has happened. will explain that while the text may not be regarded as ideal by any participant we do not intend to amend it or to have further negotiations on it. I hope that they will also feel able to give their endorsement to the approach Peter outlines. We shall make it known that this has been handed over but that it is not our intention to publish the document at this stage; and we will suggest that all concerned continue to respect its confidentiality while they consider it. Of course, should the press begin to publish selected or distorted passages then, in order to preserve the integrity of the process, it might be necessary for us to publish the text in full ourselves. If Peter is not able to make the statement because one of the potential participants is not satisfied that it represents an acceptable basis for formal talks we will in any event release the text as a record of the conclusions which we as a Government have drawn from the exchanges of the past fourteen months.

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Sinn Fein Ard Theis

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In order to maintain the momentum with the Northern Ireland parties in the light of the Parliamentary timetable, they will be asked to give their reactions by 26 March. Peter is sending a separate note to Gerry Collins in the United States with a copy of the text and suggesting a further informal meeting as soon as he returns. If, as I hope, there is no objection, it would then be possible for Peter to make this statement in the House of Commons on 27 March. He could discuss with Gerry Collins whether, as partners in this enterprise, you would wish to be associated with this announcement and, if so, how that might be achieved.

Mr Charles J Haughey TD An Taoiseach

during which we covered predictable areas such

and the continuing PIRA campaign including the Downing Street

peruliarly naive if they thought that any Government could accept

Presence speech, the Christmas cease!