

Office of the Independent Chairmen

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TO: All Participants

FROM: The Independent Chairmen

SUBJECT: Draft Paper

April 6, 1998

We submit this Draft Paper for your consideration. Although it includes some of our thoughts and words, it is predominantly a synthesis of the views of the Governments and the parties, advanced in written submissions and orally at group meetings in the various strands, sub-groups and sub-committees and in bilateral meetings with us. As you are aware, many parts of this Draft Paper are based on work done by the two Governments, jointly except in the case of Strand One.

You, the participants, asked that we prepare this document, in the belief, which we share, that it is necessary to establish an overall view of the issues to facilitate a final decision. Seeing the issues in this comprehensive way strengthens our conviction, as we hope it will yours, that a fair and responsible agreement is possible.

We recognize that there are disagreements on a number of issues. We understand that the portion of the Draft Paper which deals with the North/South Ministerial Council (Strand Two) represents a delicate balance, in particular that between the situations described in paragraphs 7 and 8 of that portion.

We also appreciate that the issue of cross-community agreement in those portions of the Draft Paper which deal with Democratic Institutions in Northern Ireland (Strand One) and those which deal with policing, equality, and on the release of prisoners are especially sensitive.

These clearly are areas which you will want to consider carefully.

We anticipate that there will now be a period of intensive discussion and negotiation. The Chairmen and the Governments will be available to take part in these discussions. You, the participants, are the owners of this process and it is you who must decide if there is to be an agreement and, if so, what it is to provide.

We know that each of you is working in good faith to reach an agreement. We hope this document will assist you in that effort.