D J R HILL FROM:

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

20 JUNE 1996

POLITICAL AFFAI DIVISION 20 JUN 1996 NIO PELFAST

Revised CC list

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	of State(L+B)	-B
C	PS/Secretary of State(L+B)	-В
	ps/Michael Anciam(1.2)	-B
	PS/Sir David Fell	-В
	Mr Leach(L+B)	-В
	Mr Watkins	-B
	Mr Stephens	
	MI Beeping	-B
	Mr Lavery	-B
	Mr Maccabe	-В
	Mr Whysall(L+B)	-B
	Miss Harrison(L+B)	_p
	11-19 and As I like	

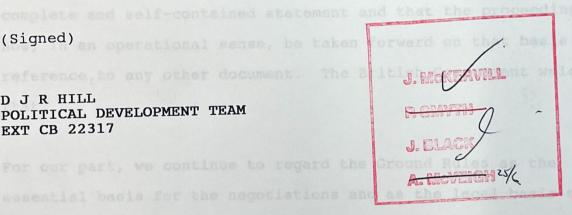
Mr Thomas(L) -B

## GROUND RULES/RULES OF PROCEDURE

I attach a slightly revised version of the statement HMG might make when the proposed rules of procedure (as expanded) are adopted, to explain our position on the status of the Ground Rules.

I will let the Irish have a copy, without commitment. where all delegations are satisfied that they constitute a full,

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(20 June revise)

## POSSIBLE STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF THE GROUND RULES

The British Government welcomes agreement on <u>rules of procedure</u> for these negotiations which constitute a single source of reference for the operational conduct of our proceedings.

We welcome the convergence demonstrated during discussion of the various papers tabled by delegations last Friday and, as I indicated previously, we were entirely content to withdraw the Procedural Guidelines circulated by the two Governments on 6 June and work instead on the composite draft circulated by the Independent Chairmen on 18 June.

We have now between us developed the rules of procedure to the point where all delegations are satisfied that they constitute a full, complete and self-contained statement and that the proceedings can now, in an operational sense, be taken forward on that basis without reference to any other document. The British Government welcomes that.

For our part, we continue to regard the Ground Rules as the essential basis for the negotiations and as the legal basis to the extent that that is necessary as a consequence of the references to the Ground Rules in the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations etc) Act. Equally we continue to hold to the view which (as Mr Peter Robinson reminded us last week) I expressed in the House of Commons

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during the debates on the Entry to Negotiations Act that the conduct of the negotiations is, as the Ground Rules themselves acknowledge, "exclusively a matter for those involved in the negotiations".

We are <u>all</u> now, as I understand it, ready to proceed to conduct negotiations of the character referred to in the Ground Rules on the basis of the Rules of Procedure now before us. That is a necessary, important and positive achievement. I acknowledge the constructive role which <u>all</u> delegations have played in bringing that about, and the role of Senator Mitchell in leading the discussions which have produced this result. The British Government delegation looks forward to real engagement on the substance of the important issues which now fall to be addressed.

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