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DRAFT LETTER

Mr John Hume MP MEP
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Thank you for your letter of 29 November which I received on 2 December while preparing for my working meeting with the Taoiseach the following day.

In Brussels on 29 October the Taoiseach and I agreed that we would work together in our own terms on a framework for peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Since then both Governments have been considering making a Joint Statement, consistent with our principles, which will address our understanding of constitutional issues and political realities. We agreed in Dublin on Friday that there remained scope for further discussions, and that these would be taken forward in the first instance by officials. I shall be meeting the Taoiseach again in Brussels ^{to} ~~at the~~ European Council later this week when we can take stock of ~~the~~ progress.

~~I know that you are convinced that there is a real opportunity now for peace in Northern Ireland. I can assure~~

~~you that~~ ^{shall} I ~~will~~ continue to work intensively to see if a
Joint Statement can be made which fully reflects the
interest and concerns of both sides of the community in
Northern Ireland. In tandem, the Government is also seeking
to stimulate further progress in the political talks,
building on the work which Michael Ancram has been
conducting with the constitutional parties.