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Mr Lamont, RID

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BEYOND THE OPENING PLENARY

1. Your note of 20 June commissioned Central Secretariat to produce a first draft of a Strand II paper on "Common Interests and Themes", which I now attach.
2. As agreed, the paper sets out the factual position regarding the range of common interests and existing co-operation, as well as a list of sectors where enhanced co-operation might provide mutual benefit North and South. You will see that this second list draws exclusively from the list of functions which the British and Irish Governments agreed during the course of the negotiations on the JFD would be suitable for inclusion in the executive and harmonisation tiers of North/South working. It is not an exhaustive list of such functions, its purpose being simply to highlight to Talks participants the potential which undoubtedly exists.
3. I should be grateful for your comments and those of copy recipients on the terms of the draft.

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[DRAFT - 2/7/96]

STRAND II - COMMON INTERESTS AND THEMES

Paper by Her Majesty's Government

1. Both parts of the island of Ireland have many interests and opportunities in common, and this is especially so in the context of the European Union. These interests and opportunities arise in the political, social and economic fields. This paper provides an indication of the level and nature of co-operative projects which currently exist, together with some illustrative examples of areas where greater North/South co-operation might be both possible and of benefit to both parts of the island. The illustrative examples are provided, not as defining HMG's preferences, but to stimulate discussion.

Common Interests

2. The people of the island of Ireland share a number of common interests, including:
 - a common island;
 - a similar historical background;
 - the desire for the establishment of a permanent peace;
 - a common desire to secure further economic development;
 - membership of the European Union;
 - a common basis of law and democratic institutions;
 - common protection of fundamental rights and freedoms through the European Convention on Human Rights.

Existing North/South Co-operation

3. As would be expected of two jurisdictions sharing a land boundary and the range of common interests outlined above, there is already a substantial amount of North/South co-operation, some of which has developed as a result of the EU dimension.

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Current North/South co-operation includes:

- (a) **Agriculture:** there exists a high level of co-operation on a wide range of issues relating to animal and plant health, particularly the containment and eradication of certain diseases. The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and the Office of Public Works in ROI are jointly responsible for the day to day operation and management of the recently re-opened Shannon/Erne Waterway, which has proved hugely successful in its first two seasons of operation. Valuable cross-border co-operation is also taking place in areas such as horse breeding, agri-tourism, the production of low-fat meat products, and inland and marine fisheries research.

- (b) **Economic Development:** the IDB and Irish Trade Board have co-operated on a number of initiatives aimed at encouraging North/South and international trade. For 1996 these include participation in the 1996 "Look is Ireland" fair in New Jersey; the publication of a directory of distributors and agents for consumer product manufacturers, North and South; and joint participation/sponsorship of a number of trade development exhibitions. Other projects include a cross-border project to enhance competitiveness and improve co-operation between business in border regions through Information Technology and advanced telecommunications; a proposal to provide information on a cross-border basis on employment opportunities; and the establishment of the Health and Safety Forum, comprising representatives from the GB Health and Safety Executive, the NI Health and Safety Agency and the ROI Health and Safety Authority who meet regularly to discuss and exchange ideas on matters of mutual interest.

- (c) **Education and the Arts:** there is a considerable amount of joint research between the universities north and south in areas such as environmental science, agricultural science and microelectronics. The Arts Council for Northern Ireland and An Chomhairle Ealaíon have established a Joint Committee

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to explore and develop a variety of cross-border initiatives with particular emphasis on the involvement of youth.

- (d) **Energy:** the electricity interconnector between the NIE and ESB networks has been restored and is now fully operational. Standby linkages have also been established in the Donegal/Londonderry and Roscommon/Fermanagh regions. Agreement has been reached that Northern Ireland's new gas interconnector with Scotland will be connected to the ROI's line in Scotland near Castledouglas.
- (e) **Environment:** in the area of conservation, there is close collaboration on habitats and species that require protection at national and international level, as well as the designation and subsequent management of cross-border Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas under EU directives. Collaborative projects have also been developed in the areas of sewerage treatment and water supply.
- (f) **Health:** discussions are on-going on issues such as health promotion, supplies and procurement, acute hospital services and child and family care. Plans are currently being developed for the establishment of an Institute of Health to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to public health issues on both sides of the border.
- (g) **Tourism:** NITB and Bord Failte are co-operating on a programme of joint marketing of the island of Ireland as a tourist destination. The tourist boards are also co-operating on the development and implementation of an all-Ireland computerised system for accommodation reservations and tourist information and its possible further expansion to international markets.
- (h) **Transport:** initiatives include the up-grading of the Belfast/Dublin Rail Link, improved cross-border road links and the re-opening of cross-border roads previously closed

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for security reasons.

Scope for enhanced co-operation

5. Clearly a good deal is already being done, but equally clearly there exists scope to enhance the level of co-operation which currently exists. As the preceding paragraphs indicate, enhanced co-operation is most likely to be workable where it is in recognition and pursuit of mutual benefit. In addition, a common interest and the achievement of economies of scale are important factors in considering the benefits of adopting a co-operative approach. Talks participants may therefore wish to consider how far there is scope for closer co-operation in the interests of both parts of the island of Ireland.
6. While increased North/South co-operation could encompass cross border issues only, in principle the potential for mutually beneficial co-operation could extend across the entire range of transferred services in Northern Ireland and their equivalents in the Republic of Ireland. The paragraphs below seek to highlight some areas where it appears possible that further co-operation could bring economic and/or social benefits to both parts of the island of Ireland.
7. The practical scope for co-operation can only be properly determined following detailed examination of the implications in each discrete area. Subject to this, it seems likely that the scope for co-operation could usefully be explored in relation to the following sectors:
 - (a) Agriculture: this might include a variety of freshwater and other inland fishery issues including research, fisheries education and training, and fish farming. Agricultural training and advisory services, research and development, animal welfare issues, water course management and drainage might also benefit from a co-operation approach. Given the similarities between the agriculture economics North and South, cross-border co-operation on rural development

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programmes could also prove beneficial.

- (b) **Culture and Heritage:** this sector might include support and promotion of the arts and sport on a North/South basis; support and management of museums; heritage protection and restoration; support for the Irish language, and the promotion of Irish culture abroad.
- (c) **Economic Development:** there would seem to be scope here for a co-operative approach to the development and support of indigenous industries, with particular regard to the small business sector; the promotion of research; and to management development (ie training and support) services for industry. Scope may also exist in areas such as the promotion and marketing of exports of food, manufactured goods and services; and the marketing of public and private sector consultancy expertise.
- (d) **Education:** consideration might be given to areas such as the exchange of teachers and administrative staff; and education for specialised needs, where some mutual benefit might accrue for example from the sharing of facilities.
- (e) **Energy:** there may be scope for co-operative working on issues such as energy research and alternative energy; geological surveying; and in the promotion and regulation of oil, gas and minerals exploration.
- (f) **Environment:** environmental issues might include the formulation of policy and strategy with regard to environmental protection and pollution management; and policy with regard to wildlife management and conservation, where substantial work on specific species is already carried out on a North/South basis.
- (g) **Health:** this sector might include health promotion; the purchasing of medical supplies and equipment; cross-border provision of hospital services; and major emergency/accident

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planning.

(h) **Transport:** this might include the closer planning and co-ordination of the major transport services on the island of Ireland, including the planning of national road routes, and the development of policy in respect of rail services and regional airports. Regulatory areas of road transport (eg driver licensing, vehicle testing etc), and road safety issues might also have potential for development on a North/South basis.

8. The creation of any new arrangements or institutions to promote the type of co-operation possibilities in individual subject areas mentioned above would need to be carefully examined on a case by case basis, and most probably in the light of consideration by Talks participants of overall North/South institutional arrangements.

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