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Dear General de Chastelain,

Our two Governments have worked to secure the launch of comprehensive negotiations to achieve a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands, and to agree new institutions and structures to take account of the totality of relationships. We believe the negotiations which start on 10 June offer the best opportunity for many years to secure this goal.

On behalf of our two Governments, we invite you to join a group of distinguished individuals, chaired by Senator George Mitchell, to play a role in chairing the various aspects of the negotiations which require independent chairmanship.

Our two Governments have agreed to invite you to provide the independent chairmanship in Strand Two of the negotiations. As such, you would also chair the Business Committee, unless the participants in the negotiations, in accordance with the Ground Rules, were to decide otherwise. We also invite you to help Senator Mitchell in assisting our two Governments in giving effect to our joint commitment under paragraph 15 of the Ground Rules for the negotiations, a copy of which is enclosed.

Members of the group invited by the two Governments are your former colleagues on the International Body, Senator Mitchell and Mr Holkeri. The roles envisaged for the other members of the group are set out in paragraph 4 of the "Scenario for the Opening Plenary Session", a copy of which is enclosed.

As that paragraph also makes clear, both Governments are agreed that it will be open to the group to propose alternative options in the light of the requirements of the negotiations or as circumstances warrant.

The negotiations will be launched at 2.00 pm on Monday 10 June at Castle Buildings, Belfast, by the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister, after which they would hand over to Senator Mitchell as Chairman of the opening plenary. The arrangements envisaged for this opening session are set out in the "Scenario for the Opening Plenary Session".

Some other key documents which provide guidance on the negotiations and the role of the chairmen are also enclosed.

Representatives of the following parties have been invited to nominate their negotiating teams:

Alliance Party

Democratic Unionist - DUP

Labour



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Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)

Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

UK Unionist Party (Robert McCartney)

Ulster Democratic Party (UDP)

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

The above list does not include Sinn Féin, in line with the policy set out by the Prime Minister and Taoiseach when they met on 28 February. Sinn Féin's participation in the negotiations requires the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994. We very much hope that Sinn Féin can take their place in the negotiations, but this will not be possible unless and until there is an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire.

We remain profoundly grateful for the distinguished service in the cause of peace offered by you and your colleagues on the International Body. We very much hope you will feel able to accept our invitation to play a key role in these negotiations also.

Naturally, we stand ready to answer any questions, and to follow up with all haste in providing you with such other guidance as you may require.

Yours sincerely,

Dick Spring TD  
Tánaiste and Minister for  
Foreign Affairs

The Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP  
Secretary of State for  
Northern Ireland