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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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26 September 1996

Dear John,

HUME/ADAMS: REVISED TEXT

I attach for the Prime Minister's consideration a revised text which adjusts our agreed Hume/Adams text to fit more comfortably with the format of a newspaper article. The text has been cleared by my Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Crawford

ROBERT CRAWFORD

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DRAFT TEXT

(26 September 1996)

1. The negotiations launched on 10 June have one overriding aim: to secure an overall political settlement, achieved through agreement and founded on consent. The talks will address all the issues relevant to such a settlement. Inclusive in nature, they involve both Governments and all the relevant political parties with the necessary democratic mandate and commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.
2. The prospects for success in these negotiations will be greatly enhanced if they are conducted in a peaceful environment. By law, if the Government considers that there is an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Féin will be invited to nominate a team to participate in the negotiations. Beyond that, both the British and Irish Governments are agreed that these negotiations are without preconditions.
3. It is equally clear that, to be successful, the negotiations must be peaceful, based on exclusively democratic and peaceful means. There must be no recourse to the threat (actual or implied) or use of violence or coercion. So, on entry to the negotiations, each participant needs to make clear their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body. The parties in the talks have all done just that.
4. The range of issues on which an overall agreement will depend means that the negotiations will be on the basis of a comprehensive agenda, adopted by agreement. Each participant will be able to raise any significant issue of concern to them and receive a fair hearing for those concerns, without this being subject to the veto of any other party. Any aspect can be raised including constitutional issues and any other matter which any party considers relevant. No negotiated outcome is either predetermined or excluded in advance or limited by anything other than the need for agreement.

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5. Among the crucial issues is decommissioning. So the opening plenary will address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning. At that stage, the Government, along with the Irish Government, will be seeking the commitment of all participants to work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the International Body's report. This includes its compromise approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of negotiations. We want to make urgent progress in this area so that the process of decommissioning is not seen as a precondition to further progress but is used to build confidence one step at a time during the negotiations. As progress is made on political issues, even modest mutual steps on decommissioning could help create the atmosphere needed for further steps in a progressive pattern of mounting trust and confidence.

6. All parties are treated equally in the negotiations in accordance with the scale of their democratic mandate. No party has an undemocratic advantage. The negotiations will operate on the basis of consensus, requiring at least the support of parties representing a majority of both the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland respectively. But no one party by withdrawing from the negotiations can prevent them proceeding.

7. It has been accepted that all participants will negotiate in good faith, seriously address all aspects of the agreed agenda and make every effort to reach a comprehensive agreement. For their part, the two Governments are committed to ensure that all items on the comprehensive agenda are fully addressed. They will do so themselves with a view to overcoming any obstacles which may arise.

8. The British Government is wholly committed to upholding, so far as we are able, our responsibility to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of agreement. This must be based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions. We want to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement.

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14. The opportunity for progress has never been greater. The negotiations command wide support internationally. They have independent chairmen from the USA, Canada and Finland. They have the overwhelming support of people throughout these islands. It's their desire that they take place in a peaceful environment, free of all paramilitary violence.

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