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FROM: D J R HILL  
 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM  
 4 SEPTEMBER 1996

DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/PUS (B&L)  
 PS/Sir D Fell  
 Mr Thomas  
 Mr Leach  
 Mr Watkins  
 Mr Bell  
 Mr Steele  
 Mr Wood (B&L)  
 Mr Stephens  
 Mr Maccabe  
 Mr Lavery  
 Mr Perry  
 Mr Currie  
 Mr Lindsay (B&L)  
 Mr Whysall  
 Mrs Mapstone  
 Ms Bharucha  
 Mr Campbell-Bannerman  
 Mr Lamont, RID  
 HMA Dublin  
 Mr Clarke, HME Dublin  
 Ms Collins, Cabinet Office  
 Mrs McNally, CPL

1. PS/Michael Ancram (B&L)
2. PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

**TALKS: INSTILLING MOMENTUM - POSSIBLE OPENING STATEMENT**

The various handling plans and the recent minute to the Prime Minister set out the approach we have decided to adopt in the resumed Talks. I attach a possible opening statement which is intended to encapsulate and communicate that approach.

2. We hope to sign the Irish up to our general approach at tomorrow's "Adare" and to explain it to the Independent Chairmen on Sunday evening. The Secretary of State might take the further step at those meetings of suggesting that Senator Mitchell should invite him to kick off the proceedings on Monday morning and register the key elements in that agreed approach. The attached draft is intended to fulfill that purpose.

CONFIDENTIAL

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3. Launching the resumed Talks with a substantial opening statement from the Secretary of State could help to impart the necessary drive and direction from the outset. It could also preempt or distract attention from any DUP/UKUP efforts to have the Loyalists ejected from the Talks, though I would not be sanguine about that. It would at least provide another focus for delegates' and media attention.

4. I have cast the attached draft as a speaking note, which seems the most natural way to proceed. Tabling a paper (which would inevitably have to be a joint Government paper) could irritate the Unionists who would be likely to see such a formal demarche as further evidence of the two Governments attempting to stitch things up. However, it would be desirable to have a text available for informal circulation to delegations (and possibly the media) once the Secretary of State has spoken, so that there is no misunderstanding of what is proposed. Meanwhile I would be inclined not to mention the existence of a text to the Irish at this stage and to concentrate on securing

- their general support for the proposed approach to the negotiations, and

- their agreement that the Secretary of State should be invited by Senator Mitchell to speak first on Monday.

(Signed)

D J R HILL

Political Development Team

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## DRAFT STATEMENT BY HMG ON RESUMPTION OF TALKS

1. I should like to welcome you, Mr Chairman, and your colleagues back to Northern Ireland and to welcome all my fellow delegates to the resumption of these multi-party talks. With the advantage of agreed rules of procedure and a functioning Business Committee we look forward to continued purposive of engagement on the important and sensitive issues which we are here to tackle.
2. Before that engagement resumes I would like to make four points.
3. First, there is a clear need for us to make rapid substantive progress in these talks. The people of Northern Ireland need a clear lead, a positive demonstration that constitutional political activity can lead towards a resolution of the causes of political instability in Northern Ireland. In the absence of any such demonstration, disenchantment with conventional politics could deepen. Tolerance for, or even support for and involvement in, non constitutional action and the use of threat of violence could grow. None of us round this table is unaware of the dangers which that could bring.
4. We also need to take account of the approach of the UK General Election. I quite understand that it will be difficult for party delegations to negotiate boldly and effectively in the immediate run up to an election.
5. On both grounds, therefore, we have a narrow window of opportunity before us. It will be in all our interests to make demonstrable progress in the forthcoming weeks and the British Government is determined to facilitate and encourage such progress to the best of its ability. I suggest, Mr Chairman, that whatever happens we should hold a collective review of the situation in mid-November with a view to assessing what progress has been made and what the prospects are for making further progress before the

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

end of the year.

6. We will be inviting the Business Committee to factor this proposal into its consideration of how the talks timetable should be structured in the coming weeks.

7. Secondly, I am conscious that we are currently still operating in something of a limbo as we have not agreed an agenda for the rest of the opening plenary session. The two Governments tabled a proposal on 30 July which I commend to the other delegations and which I would be happy to justify in detail if that were necessary.

8. However, if that proposed agenda is not immediately acceptable I do feel strongly that it would at least be desirable to resume these talks by hearing delegations' opening statements, allowing time for the Business Committee to consider and make recommendations about the agenda for the rest of the opening plenary.

9. As I see it, the opening statements will give delegations an opportunity to set out their positions on the key issues and their approach to the negotiations as a whole. The process of delivering and listening to such statements should help to focus our attention on the substantive issues we need to address and may well reveal encouraging signs of potential convergence. At the very least the process would give us all the time and opportunity to settle down and reacquaint ourselves to working together. If the opening statements were published - and the British Government certainly intends to publish its contribution - they could provide a focus for positive reporting and analysis. We might usefully consider instituting a round of clarificatory questioning on the opening statements to ensure there is no misunderstanding of anyone's position - an important foundation for subsequent negotiations. Such clarificatory questioning was highly beneficial during the 1991 and 1992 Talks.

10. Thirdly, I should like to propose - for reasons that I shall come to in a moment - that the task of drawing up a comprehensive

CONFIDENTIAL

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agenda for the substantive political negotiations should be remitted to the Business Committee or to a sub-committee of the plenary. The Committee might begin by inviting written proposals from delegations. We set out on such a course in July and I think there was general support for the view that this would be the best way to tackle the issues.

11. My fourth and final point is that I hope we can move quickly to address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning. We could renew our proxy debate on this under the guise of considering the agenda for the rest of the opening plenary but I see little point in that. Let's get on with the substantive discussion and try to reach a generally acceptable set of conclusions which can then be reflected in arrangements for taking the decommissioning issue forward alongside our negotiations on the substantive political issues.

12. I hope all my colleagues around the table will regard these comments and suggestions as helpful. They are intended to illustrate how we could instil some real pace into these negotiations so that we begin to tackle issues of substance as soon as possible and send a reassuring signal to our various constituencies that a meaningful and potentially productive political process is under way.

13. Thank you.

My other main comment is that the current draft may require rather more extensive, and adpository reference to the events of the summer. I have suggested below some strengthening of the language of paragraph 21, but there may also be a need to reflect (possibly at paragraph 15) and to explain the events of December and the surrounding disturbances. Again, I have not suggested a

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