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ANNEX C

**DRAFT STATEMENT BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO BE DELIVERED TO THE
NORTHERN IRELAND PARTIES ON 15 SEPTEMBER [assuming current talks have had to
be suspended]**

1. We regret that the multi-party negotiations which began on 10 June 1996 were not able to reach a sufficient level of agreement to embark on a discussion of the substantive political issues which need to be resolved if there is to be a comprehensive political settlement which could underpin lasting peace.
2. However both Governments are committed to continuing to pursue rapid progress to an overall agreed settlement acceptable to both Unionists and Nationalists, founded on the principle of consent, and to be submitted for democratic ratification through referendums, North and South.
3. To this end, we intend now to begin work on proposals to be put to the people by referendum. We invite the political parties in Northern Ireland to join in intensive consultations on such proposals. The ambit of these proposals will be comprehensive, namely relationships and arrangements within Northern Ireland, including the relationship between any new institutions there and the Westminster Parliament, which will be for the British Government alone; within the whole island of Ireland; and between the two Governments, including their relationship with any new institutions in Northern Ireland.
4. [We are grateful to Senator Mitchell and Prime Minister Holkeri who have agreed to be available to facilitate these consultations. General de Chastelain will of course be acting as Chairman of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning which the two Governments have established and which becomes fully operational today.]
5. The Governments' proposals, and the consultations on them, will be conducted on the basis of acceptance of the principle of consent in all its aspects.

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6. We intend that the consultations should be as inclusive as possible of different shades of political opinion. They will be open to all the parties which participated in the Talks process and established a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods. The Governments intend also to consult a wide range of other opinion.
7. The two Governments will be ready to consult the parties in any configuration which suits the wishes and convenience of those involved. There may be bilateral, trilateral or other meetings. It is however our shared hope that, as progress is made, the parties will find it valuable to be brought once more together around the same table. It remains the view of the Government that all-party roundtable negotiations are the best means of securing the support of the parties and, in turn, the people to any outcome.
8. Our two Governments are determined that these consultations should be carried forward purposively to achieve early substantive progress. We therefore retain the date of end of May 1988 as the target for producing proposals for submission for democratic ratification through referendums. If it would assist the progress of the consultations the two Governments also stand ready to publish consultation or other documents as circumstances require.
9. Both Governments, as signatories of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, reaffirm that they would be prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement, if that can be achieved through the process now being initiated. Their own approach to the process will be informed by the principles in the Joint Declaration and, for their part, they recall that they have described a shared understanding of the parameters of a possible outcome in A New Framework for Agreement.
10. We believe that recent events in Northern Ireland underline the need to maintain the urgent pursuit of a political accommodation and to bring that search to a resolution. We hope all parties will be ready to play an active and constructive part in the consultation process we now launch.

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