



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

23 September 1997

Dear Gary,

You asked Paul Murphy for a clear statement about the Government's intentions regarding the way in which any agreed outcome from the multi-party negotiations would be ratified.

I can reassure you that this Government remains committed to what has become known as the "triple lock". As I said in my speech in Belfast on 16 May: "Any settlement must be negotiated not imposed; it must be endorsed by the people of Northern Ireland in a referendum; and it must be endorsed by the British Parliament".

Under the rules of procedure for the negotiations, any agreed outcome must have secured the support of parties representing majorities in each main part of the community.

Both Governments have made clear their intention to submit any such agreed outcome for public approval in each jurisdiction, by referendums, North and South, before being put to their respective Parliaments for ratification and the earliest possible implementation.

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For its part, the Government will make arrangements, under Section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations etc) Act 1996, for a referendum to be held in Northern Ireland for the purpose of obtaining the views of the people of Northern Ireland on any agreed outcome from the negotiations. No proposals would be put to Parliament for ratification and implementation unless they had secured the support of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland in that referendum.

I trust this provides the reassurance you seek.

*Yours sincerely
Tony Blair*

Councillor Gary McMichael