

**DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND TALKS PROCESS
(FOR ISSUE IN THE MARGINS OF EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 11-13 DECEMBER)**

From: Philip Barton
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The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister reviewed the approach of their governments to the multi-party negotiations. They reaffirmed their commitment to work for an overall agreement which comprehensively addresses all the key issues and secures the widest possible consensus among both unionists and nationalists. They welcomed the commitment of all the parties in the process to genuine negotiations. They looked forward to early progress to engagement by all the parties on the key issues to be resolved and the outline of an overall agreement. They reaffirmed the target of May for the completion of the talks process.

In the context of the talks and more widely, they welcomed closer cooperation between the two countries and the strengthening of the bilateral relationship. They reviewed progress on the intensified programme of cooperation which had been agreed between the two governments in May.

them that they will need to be checked by the police at the blocker.

I have repeated that Mrs Restrick will be admitted to the street and will give Gerry Adams a Christmas card on his way up. I also warned Siobhan O'Hanlon that there will probably be some demonstrators outside the gates.

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