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CONFIDENTIALDiscussion DocumentMulti-Party Talks: Heads/Elements of a Possible AgreementIntroduction

The attached paper attempts to outline what might be the essential elements of a broadly acceptable agreement. It has been prepared as an aid to discussion. It represents the frank assessment of some senior Irish Government officials and advisers of the elements which seem both to be required and to be achievable. It is our candid assessment that if any of the elements listed is excluded, or if there is an unwillingness to compromise on points of difficulty, agreement will not be possible at this time.

If it appeared that agreement might be possible on the general lines set out in the paper, a fuller text could be prepared within a short period for detailed consideration by all the parties.

This agreed outcome of the Talks would include interlocking and mutually supportive arrangements and commitments, including (i) structures within Northern Ireland; (ii) North/South structures; (iii) East/West structures and arrangements which cater for the totality of relationships between the various peoples of these islands, including relations between the two sovereign Governments; (iv) balanced change on constitutional issues; and (v) agreed provisions to address rights, justice, equality, prisoners and other confidence issues. There would also need to be agreement on how the outcome is to be democratically validated and implemented.

7 January 1998