



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 December 1997

Dear John,

Northern Ireland: Invitation to Mandela

You asked for advice on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's letter of 12 December.

The NIO consulted us about the proposal to add official support to the invitation Mandela has already received from the NI Chamber of Commerce. How important a visit by Mandela would be to the peace process is a matter for the NIO. We advised that, although the best way to ensure a visit would be for the Prime Minister to write to Mandela, that would associate the Prime Minister with the invitation, to the extent that the South Africans might expect the Prime Minister to join Mandela at the event in Northern Ireland. We therefore suggested that the High Commissioner might deliver a letter from Dr Mowlam to Mandela.

There is no guarantee that Mandela will be able to come to this event. He will be in great demand in his last year in office. The only other proposal we are aware of for him to visit the UK is for in connection with a charity cricket match in mid-June.

*Yours ever,
Fiona*

(Fiona Mylchreest)
Private Secretary

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