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Thank you for your letter of 12 January setting out a number of specific questions on the Propositions on Heads of Agreement tabled on behalf of the two Governments earlier that day.

As the two Governments made clear in the press release they issued to accompany that paper, it was intended to provide a basis for debate and discussion, and the various elements, taken together, offer only the outline of an acceptable agreement.

The propositions are in a real sense derived from the views of all the parties. They represent our best guess at what could be a generally acceptable outcome. The nature of any agreement must be determined in the detailed negotiations.

Both Governments naturally remain committed to the positions set out in the Joint Declaration and in the Framework Document.

The outcome of the negotiations must attract sufficient support within the talks and be capable of securing widespread support in both traditions. The Governments look forward to hearing the views of the parties on these propositions and in any other areas agreed by the parties themselves.

Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

David Andrews TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs

*Previous drafts
included*
/x