A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM:

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

In 1992 the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland spent 6 months in Talks together. They were in search of a political settlement.

Our own Government and the Irish Government took part in the Talks when that was appropriate.

That process of Talks ended in November 1992. Later the two Governments were asked by some of the parties to try and explain our shared ideas on the kind of settlement that we thought could work.

Not for the internal Government of Northern Ireland; that is solely for own Government.

But for Northern Ireland's relationships with the Republic, and for the relationships between the two Governments.

So we set about drawing up a Joint Framework Document.

It has taken a long time, but today we have published the result. It is called "A Framework for Agreement."

Today, too, the British Government has published our own ideas about how to return to Northern Ireland, in a fair way, a real say in how it is governed. It is called "A Framework for Accountable Government in Northern Ireland."

You can get each paper at your main Post Office, or through Freefone 0800 374 964.

Both these papers are simply offered to the political parties to help them start talking again about the issues.

With us, and with each other.

So that a settlement might be agreed in the end, with all that that could bring for Northern Ireland.

Neither of these papers is anything like a blueprint. Nothing is to be imposed. Agreement by the parties is the key to everything.

And if the Talks did result in agreement, then there would be a referendum.

Because each paper is fairly detailed and complex, I wanted to offer you a simple guide to them.

The rest of this leaflet does this.

I hope you will consider our proposals, and let the parties and ourselves know what you think.

FRAMEWORKS FOR YOUR FUTURE

FRAMEWORK FOR ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

With the purpose of restoring democracy to Northern Ireland, as part of an overall settlement, it:

- Proposes a 90 member Assembly, elected by PR, with substantial legislative and administrative powers over Northern Ireland affairs

- Proposes a system of detailed checks and balances, including weighted voting on contentious business

- Envisages a system of departmental committees and Chairmen, reflecting party strengths, to take over many of the current responsibilities of Northern Ireland Ministers

- Suggests a separately elected Panel of 3, operating unanimously in a monitoring and referees role in relation to the Assembly

FRAMEWORK FOR AGREEMENT

With the purpose of promoting agreement and reconciliation it:

- Reaffirms the Downing Street Declaration principles of democracy, consent and peaceful democratic means

- Proposes Irish recognition of the need to remove the territorial claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland, contrary to the will of its people, and British recognition of the need to ensure that its constitutional legislation is consistent with the Downing Street Declaration

- Proposes a North/South Body in which elected representatives from the Assembly, acting with the authority of that Assembly, and answerable to that Assembly could, by agreement, carry out designated functions, including executive functions, in clearly defined areas to the benefit of both North and South

- Ensures that extensions of powers can take place, but only with the agreement of the Assembly

- Proposes a new Agreement to develop and extend co-operation between the Republic of Ireland and the UK

- Suggests ways of dealing with fundamental breaches of a settlement without creating Joint Sovereignty or Authority over Northern Ireland

- Proposes involvement of the Assembly in the Anglo-Irish Conference while ensuring that the Conference would not deal with matters exclusive to the Assembly

- Re-assserts the importance of protecting civil rights

THESE ARE OUR SUGGESTIONS. LET THE PARTIES AND US HAVE YOUR VIEWS