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SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

Dr John Alderdice
88 University Street
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28 March 1991

Dear John,

I am grateful to you for responding promptly and positively to my letter of 14 March. We now truly have an opportunity to make a new beginning for Northern Ireland and address the wider relationships which bear on the situation here, and to seek a comprehensive political accommodation likely to gain general acceptance.

The next step clearly is to proceed with the necessary practical arrangements and I have asked my Permanent Under Secretary or his Deputy to be in touch with you, or a nominated representative of your party, within the next few days to take these matters forward.

On timing, I sense that we should aim to launch the formal talks process before the end of April. I hope that will give all parties time to prepare themselves. The timing may mean that there will be two further meetings of the Inter-Governmental Conference before the gap is launched.

The talks about practical arrangements will need to translate the commitment we have all made to an intensive schedule into a



detailed plan of work. I would not want to prejudge the outcome, but it may be helpful for you to know at the outset that my starting point is to assume that we must all be prepared to clear our diaries for around three or four days a week throughout the talks.

Lans.

PB

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