



Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast BT4 3ST

Dr John Alderdice  
Alliance Party for Northern Ireland  
Headquarters  
88 University Street  
BELFAST  
BT7 1HE

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You will recall that, in a speech on 11 October, I invited the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, and others as well, to let me have their views on the forthcoming Review under Article 11 of the Anglo Irish Agreement. This letter is, therefore, by way of a formal invitation to you to let the Government have the benefit of the views of your party on this most important subject, as you yourself proposed in your letter to me of 15 September.

You may find it helpful, therefore, if I repeat briefly what I said last Tuesday. The review, starting in November, will cover the whole working of the Intergovernmental Conference and its associated Secretariat to see whether any changes in the scope and nature of its activities are desirable in the light of our experience since it was set up.

No one can deny the importance of the Agreement for Northern Ireland. The review of the working of the Conference and the Secretariat is no narrow exercise. Hence, to help us with our own work on the Review, the Government wants to be able to take into account the full spectrum of views held in the Province.



We want to hear from the elected representatives of all sections of the community, including your own; just as we also want to hear from others who have views to put forward. I know that there have been complaints about a lack of consultation in the past, but those who have complained now have the opportunity to contribute to the process of the Review. I hope that opportunity will be put to constructive use. For I believe that there is now a real opportunity for your party - and the other Northern Ireland parties - to put forward views on the widest possible range of political and constitutional matters. I would prefer to have your comments in writing in the first instance, but I would of course be happy to meet you and your colleagues (as you suggested in your September letter) after that.

I am writing in similar terms to the leaders of the other constitutional Northern Ireland parties, as well as to the other party leaders at Westminster.

TK

A handwritten signature consisting of a large, stylized '2' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical line extending downwards.

JB 16404