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DRAFT LETTER

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE:

To  Dick Spring Tanaiste  (Full Postal Address)	Enclosures	(Full Address, if necessary)
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LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY: SECRETARY OF STATE  
(Name of Signatory)

THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE TALKS PROCESS

May I wish you, and your colleagues, a Happy New Year! I look forward to continuing our shared endeavours in 1994 and we should meet, if not before, at the Conference now arranged for the 26th.

There will, as usual, be much to discuss. The main purpose of this letter is to canvas the way forward on political development, following the Joint Declaration.

The Joint Declaration may itself make some contribution. Its reception overall has been much better than we might have feared though, in respect of the Provisional Movement, so far falling short of what we hoped. There may yet be a positive response, though

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there are some signs that the Provisionals have the stomach neither to accept it nor reject it. There will no doubt be further manoeuvres to try to raise diversionary issues, to bargain in advance of a cessation of violence, to divide the two Governments (so far without success), and to recruit John Hume. It is possible the clear response will never be received, save through events on the ground, and these have unfortunately included since Christmas more murder and destruction.

In any case both Governments have made clear what would follow a permanent end to violence. In the meantime, the two Governments should demonstrate business as usual. I believe this - and in particular progress on the Talks - will constitute a real additional pressure on the Provisionals, as well as being highly desirable in its own right. It would, in my judgement, be wrong for us to allow the Provisional Movement to hold the initiative as would be the case if we were to delay, or appear to delay, further political moves while they continued, or pretended to continue, the process of reflection and consultation on the Joint Declaration.

It may, regrettably, be necessary to intensify our work on security co-operation, as the Taoiseach has suggested publicly. As you know we have a detailed programme of work on that. We shall want to discuss this at the IGC.

My immediate concern is with the Talks Process. Both Governments, though recently concentrating for obvious reasons on the Joint

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Declaration, have repeatedly stressed that the Talks Process is urgent and vital and that its objectives are valid and achievable. I believe that it is important that both Governments, though having made it clear that there is a route open to Sinn Fein, should demonstrate that they are ready to press on.

In a number of ways the Joint Declaration, though focussed on what we agreed to regard as a complementary "peace process", itself makes a significant contribution to the Talks, and to their prospects. In setting out constitutional principles and political realities which safeguard the vital interests of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland it underpins the work we had in hand in respect of the Talks. And we have noted, with appreciation, the Taoiseach's judgement in the Dail:

"I do not know of any fairer statement that has been or could be made by the British Government with regard to Nationalist ideals than what is set out in paragraph 4 of the Joint Declaration. John Hume has correctly described it as the most comprehensive statement by a British Government on British-Irish relations in 7 years. I also believe the Irish Government have gone further than in any previous formal statement towards meeting Unionist fears and concerns".

The process of producing the Declaration, as well as the outcome, may also make a longer term contribution. I have in mind, in

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particular, your Government's imaginative efforts to consult Dr Alderdice, Ulster Unionists and other opinion formers in Northern Ireland and your generous acknowledgement of their contribution.

It may even, in a paradox typical of the process, have helped to re-engage the DUP. When Dr Paisley met the Prime Minister and me on 22 December he slipped alongside his fulminations about the Declaration confirmation that he would participate in the Talks Process, provided it was on the basis of the 26 March 1991 statement. In an attempt to consolidate this, I have written to him to invite him to join Michael Ancram's bilateral discussions. I hope this comes off. You have, I know, been rightly anxious that without the DUP the process would be much harder to bring to a successful conclusion.

I have also written to the other party leaders to encourage further discussions with Michael Ancram. I hope all this will be fruitful.

However, it is in my view of the essence of that, at the right point, we must move out of this bilateral and exploratory phase and address, as the 26 March 1991 ground rules necessitate, all the strands.

This brings me back, inevitably, to the outstanding work between us on developing - in the words the Prime Minister and Taoiseach used in their Brussels Joint Statement - a framework to carry the process

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forward. You will recall the background: we made it clear that in any new Talks we would be ready, if it would help, to table proposals to give focus and direction, but that we wished in advance to share ideas with you. You had a similar approach and we agreed, at the IGC on 10 September, to commission officials to produce, without commitment, an illustrative draft of a possible outcome from the process consistent with the agreed statement of 26 March and likely to prove acceptable to all the parties.

We believe this work remains vital for at least three reasons. First it is important that the two Governments develop and demonstrate mutual understanding. (The Joint Declaration is both an example of this and perhaps the first instalment.) Second all the parties need reassurance that an agreed convergent outcome is possible to give them the necessary confidence to re-engage in multilateral exchanges, with the inevitable expectations and risks which this would arouse. Third a more developed understanding between the two Governments would itself help us both to provide the platform to re-convene Talks. (The Joint Declaration may itself go some of the way, and Michael Ancram hopes to explore this with the parties, but I doubt if it will take the trick on its own.)

We believe the discussions which took place in the Liaison Group were valuable, and should be continued and brought to a conclusion. As you know we tabled a paper on 24 September, and there were increasingly detailed discussions on it. I know your own response

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has been complicated by the unauthorised leak of a draft paper on 19 November in the Irish Press. I hope the inevitable difficulties arising from that do not preclude further exchanges in the Liaison Group. It may help if I make clear that while there are significant elements of the leaked draft paper which would have given us real difficulties - as I understand your officials would know from the Liaison Group discussions - I would have regarded it, had it been submitted to us in the intended fashion, as a useful step forward towards a common understanding. But no doubt before any document of this kind were finalised account should be taken of the reactions to the leaked paper within Northern Ireland.

I hope that it will be possible to complete a paper, the confidentiality of which our side would obviously do all it could to protect. But a document from your side may not be essential. I suspect officials on both sides, given what they already know of our respective views, might have sufficient ingenuity to enable them to broker a single text, without commitment and ad referendum Ministers, without the necessity for further intermediate papers. May we instruct them to proceed accordingly, with all despatch?