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DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY PS/SECRETARY OF STATE TO:

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Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
London

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**JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE**

My Secretary of State thought that the Prime Minister might like to have an assessment of the present position on the Joint Declaration Initiative, including an account of the action he proposes to take over the weekend, and to consider a possible strategy for the period leading to the Dublin Summit on 3 December.

"Hume/Adams"

Despite the Prime Minister's and Taoiseach's Joint Statement in Brussels on 29 October the "Hume/Adams" peace initiative continues to provide the focus for a great deal of public speculation in the United Kingdom and Ireland, and around the world wherever there are those who take an interest in the problems of Northern Ireland. This is clearly one reason why Adams and the Provisionals appear to believe that this peace process offers them a good chance for success on their own terms at present. They will certainly have taken heart from John Hume's own continuing

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commitment to his process, and what appear to be ambiguous signals emanating from Dublin about it. At a press conference in London yesterday Mitchel McLaughlin, Sinn Fein Party Chairperson, said /hat "The Dublin Government has become more positive presumably in line with widespread support the initiative enjoys among Irish Nationalists". He went on to draw attention to Wednesday's ICM poll in The Guardian which suggested that less than 20% of people in Britain thought that Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom and nearly 60% supported the inclusion of Sinn Fein in political dialogue. On the other hand, President Clinton's robust letter to Mayor Dinkins setting out his support for the early resumption of political talks and for his Attorney-General's refusal of a visa to Gerry Adams does show that the currents are not flowing entirely in one direction.

Joint Declaration Initiative

For his part the Taoiseach continues to be enthusiastic about the Joint Declaration Initiative. At the meeting between Sir Robin Butler and Dermot Nally on 10 November the Irish underlined this commitment and indicated that progress on the JDI would colour their approach to the political talks process. The new text (JD13 - copy attached at Annex A) incorporates amendments made by Archbishop Eames and indicates, so the Irish believe, their willingness to go some distance to meet HMG's, and Northern Ireland's Unionists', concerns about the text of the Declaration. The Taoiseach apparently wants to agree a text with HMG and then show it to the Provisionals on a take-it-or-leave it basis with a

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deadline attached in order to "smoke them out". The Irish view appears to be that they have cooperated with us in order to protect HMG's freedom for manoeuvre because they are so committed to the initiative. They have accepted the necessity for decoupling it from the Hume/Adams process in the public mind, and their present text seeks in paragraph 1, not necessarily successfully, to emphasise the existence of a separate and prior peace process.

JD13 does, as might be expected from the incorporation of suggestions by Archbishop Eames, go some way further to address the concerns of Unionists. Nevertheless there remain difficulties, not least the continuing omission of an explicit reference to the constitutional guarantee to Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom (the amended version of the Declaration (JD12) including such an explicit reference was shown to Mr Molyneaux but not given to the Irish).

The Taoiseach's letter to the Prime Minister of 11 November also alludes to growing differences between the two Governments on the JDI. The Taoiseach clearly feels politically exposed (a sensation presumably heightened by his saturation last weekend in the atmosphere of the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis), and wants to deliver peace by Christmas.

The Prime Minister has already seen the account of my Secretary of State's conversation with Mr Spring last night in which he sought to correct the misapprehension in Dublin that HMG was not interested in the Initiative. The Prime Minister has also now

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replied to Mr Reynolds in unambiguous terms. Neither the Taoiseach nor Tanaiste can doubt either that we will give careful consideration to JD13 or the importance we attach to the active continuation of parallel steps in the political talks process. Michael Ancram has concluded his present round of bilateral contacts with the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and we shall be reporting his assessment of the position shortly.

Having fully established our seriousness of purpose in dealing with the JDI it is Sir Patrick Mayhew's judgement that we should follow a course of action which will lead either to the established cessation of violence we all desire, or, at worst, a position (probably at the Dublin Summit) where the two Governments, and the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, are demonstrably standing shoulder to shoulder on the way forward.

To achieve this result it would be desirable to agree a text with the Irish (which they may or may not test on the Provisionals in advance), which we could be reasonably certain would also have Mr Molyneaux's acquiescence. As a first step my Secretary of State has arranged to meet Dr Eames on Saturday when he will attempt to probe Eames' assessment of JD13 and to gauge how far Eames has himself involved Mr Molyneaux. He hopes then to see Mr Molyneaux on Sunday when, subject to what he has learned from the Archbishop, he will seek to test Mr Molyneaux's reaction to JD13.

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The next steps will depend upon Mr Molyneaux's judgement, Should he feel that JD13 could be acceptable to opinion in Northern Ireland we would be free to use the Butler/Nally channel to hone the text further to suit our requirements before the Dublin Summit.

The other option would be to table a British draft of the Joint Declaration. Sir Patrick Mayhew sees two different routes to achieve that end.

The first is, with the Prime Minister's authority, to engage in more active negotiation with the Irish over the Joint Declaration text. This could clearly include tabling our own amendments or indeed a full alternative draft. The disadvantages of taking that approach are the taints both of Hume/Adams and the extent to which it might appear to be a negotiation at one remove with the Provisionals. On the other hand JD13 has been presented to us as an Irish Government text, not brokered in advance with the Provisionals, which they would intend, having agreed it with us, to show to the Provisionals on a take it or leave it basis.

The second route to a British version is to present to the Irish with a draft communiqué for the Dublin Summit which incorporates much of the language of JD13 with, in effect, a British amendment including a specific reference to the constitutional guarantee to Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom (an illustrative draft which may require further refinement is attached at Annex B). The attractions of this approach are that the exercise would

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be clearly separated from Hume/Adams and the Provisionals; the inhibitions on negotiation would not apply (although if the Irish chose, without our knowledge, to show a draft to the Provisionals it might assist them); and the result would be a publishable draft either as an agreed communiqué, or as an imaginative and defensible British position in the event of the Irish failing to agree. The illustrative draft attached sticks closely to JD13 language, for the most part, save for paragraph 2 of the Annex which is a revised version of paragraph 4 of JD13, though still retaining much of the JD approach.

It would of course be possible to produce an entirely fresh British text with virtually no taint of Hume/Adams or the Joint Declaration. But that, in my Secretary of State's judgement, is unlikely to produce an agreed position with the Irish Government in the time available.

My Secretary of State will wish to speak to the Prime Minister next week in the light of the consultations he hopes to have over the weekend. In the light of that he envisages that the Prime Minister may wish to convene a meeting to take the views of colleagues on the best way forward.

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