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RAFT MINUTE FROM PS/SOS

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Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
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JOINT DECLARATION - HANDLING PLAN

I attach a copy of the latest version of our handling plan for the time leading up to the making of the Joint Declaration by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach and the period shortly afterwards and fundamental assumption is that the success of the JD's reception in GB, and internationally will depend critically on getting it right in Northern Ireland.

Additional work based on this plan, for example, the drawing up of a full list of those opinion formers and community leaders in Northern Ireland who will be briefed, is under way. You should, however, note that it envisages, subject to timings, Parliamentary imperatives etc, my Secretary of State's leaving for Northern Ireland as soon as possible after the JD (and the Parliamentary Statement, should that now also be on Wednesday as now seems likely) is made. He judges that he could most usefully - and wholly defensibly - be in, and seen to be in Northern Ireland to ensure the message is properly put across, and Unionist opinion reassured at the earliest possible moment.

I believe that Andy Wood and his colleagues in Information Services will be keeping in close touch with Gus McDonald on arrangements for the media.

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