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DRAFT LETTER

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TO: Roderic Lyne Esq CMG Private Secretary 10 Downing Street LONDON	ENCLOSURES:	COPIES TO BE SENT TO
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FOR SIGNATURE BY:

EC SUMMIT: MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH

The Prime Minister is due to meet the Taoiseach in the margins of the European Council in Brussels tomorrow to review progress on work towards a Joint Declaration.

It should not be necessary to engage in textual negotiation during this meeting. As you know, following the meeting of the Butler/Nally Group on Tuesday, an agreed text has now been produced. This is enclosed. The Prime Minister has shown this latest text to the inner group of Cabinet Ministers, and to Mr Molyneaux.

The Ministerial meeting also had before it a draft handling plan. I enclose a copy.

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It is envisaged on both the British and Irish sides that the meeting in the margins at Brussels should be played down publicly. It should not stoke up expectations or fears about the progress which is being made. On the assumption that, following the Brussels meeting, we remain on track, it is envisaged that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach might hold a further meeting in London next Tuesday evening, at which the Joint Declaration would be made. This would deliberately be somewhat in advance of media expectations.

The only point of substance which needs to be raised with the Taoiseach is his apparent inclination, now that the idea of an all-Ireland Convention has been removed from the text, to announce that Convention either at the press conference at which the Joint Declaration is made, or very shortly thereafter.

We cannot prevent the Irish Government from taking such a step. But the likelihood is that, if done in conjunction with the making of the Joint Declaration, it would considerably weaken its presentation, especially so far as Unionist opinion in Northern Ireland is concerned. Such a move would be seen as delivering the outcome of a secret deal with the Provisionals. It would also undermine the argument that the Joint Declaration is in principle fully compatible with the Talks process. Accordingly, the Prime Minister should ideally persuade the Taoiseach that paragraph 12 of the Joint Declaration is sufficient or, failing that, that he

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should postpone the announcement of the Convention for at least a month.

A list of points which the Prime Minister might make is at

Annex A. I am copying this letter to John Sawers and Melanie Leech.

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