



Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast BT4 3ST

Dr John Alderdice
55 Knock Road
BELFAST
BT5 6LB

22 May 1992

Dear Dr Alderdice:

I am writing privately to you and each of the other three party leaders about a visit which Sir Ninian Stephen is about to make to this country.

As you may be aware Sir Ninian represents the Australian Government as an Ambassador on the Environment. With regard to that position he is planning to attend some of the sessions at the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro in the early part of June. He is about to leave Australia and will be in London throughout next week.

I do not believe that we are yet at the point where I am able to formulate a judgement on the transition to the remaining strands, in line with the procedures agreed in the statement of 26 March 1991. Indeed, yesterday afternoon's meeting served to underline the task which faces us all if we are to achieve the transition successfully. Nevertheless I propose to meet Sir Ninian next week in London and to let him know, in general terms, what point we have reached. This will provide as a useful opportunity to start building up his knowledge and it will mean that, if circumstances permit, he could return from Rio de Janeiro in June with some grounding in the issues.

Given the tight timetable to which we are all working it seemed to me to be sensible to proceed in this way. Whether you would wish to



have any preliminary contact with Sir Ninian next week is obviously a matter for you and the other party leaders but there might, in principle, be some benefit in that. Perhaps, together with the other party leaders, we could have a word about this when we meet next Tuesday.

Yours sincerely

David Ferguson

PATRICK MAYHEW

[Approved by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence]