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<b>Title:</b>	Texts of two documents received from Mr Thom of the British Embassy concerning a conference to discuss the political future of Northern Ireland from 25 to 27 September 1972: a statement issued by the Northern Ireland Office, and a letter from William Whitelaw, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to Unionist and Nationalist politicians.
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Texts of two documents received from Mr. Thom  
of the British Embassy at 8 p.m. on Friday,  
11 August 1972

1. "Following is text of a statement being issued this evening by the Northern Ireland Office:

Begins

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has today written to the leaders of the Parliamentary parties at Stormont to invite those parties to be represented at a conference to discuss the political future of Northern Ireland from 25 to 27 September. Further details will be released when the Secretary of State's letters have been delivered.

Ends."

2. "Following is text of letter from Mr. Whitelaw to Faulkner (Unionists), O'Connor (Nationalists), Fitt (SDLP), O'Neill (Alliance), Paisley (Democratic Unionists), Simpson (NILP), and Kennedy (Republican Labour):

Begins:-

I am writing to let you know that I have now reached certain conclusions about the timing, duration and composition of a conference on the political future of Northern Ireland.

I have decided that the conference should be held from 25 to 27 September. It has been suggested that we should wait until after the plebiscite, but I am convinced that it is important to have an exchange of views as soon as possible. I think we should allow three days so that everyone has an adequate opportunity to put forward their proposals.

After much consideration I have come to the conclusion that the conference should not be held in Northern Ireland or in London. I shall therefore be making arrangements for it to be held at a suitable venue in England outside London.

One of the most difficult problems has been to determine who should be represented at the conference. I have decided that the most equitable solution will be for the conference to be composed of representatives of each party which had members elected by the people to the Stormont Parliament, and that these representatives should themselves have been elected to that Parliament. I have also decided after much thought that parties should send only one delegate each but that each delegate should be free to bring such advisers with him as he considers necessary up to a maximum of six. On this basis I am inviting you to select a delegate to represent the Ulster Unionist Party at the conference and to nominate advisers to accompany him.

I have come to the conclusion that it would be right for me to take the chair.

The conference is to be a conference of representatives of the Northern Ireland people at which they can put forward



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their proposals for the future government of Northern Ireland and to report thereon to Her Majesty's Government. Although I very much hope that there will be a measure of agreement on the major issues, it will not be the object of the conference to reach decisions. It is the Government's intention, when we have heard the views of the delegates at the conference, to draft firm proposals for the future.

I think it would be helpful if each party were to submit a document for circulation to all delegates before the conference, giving their views on what they see as an acceptable solution for the government of Northern Ireland. To allow time for these to be circulated and considered in advance, it would be helpful if they could reach me by 8 September.

I am writing in these terms to representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party, the Nationalist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Alliance Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Northern Ireland Labour Party and the Republican Labour Party.

I should be grateful if you would let me know the names of your delegate and advisers as soon as possible.

I will write to you again shortly setting out the administrative arrangements for the conference."