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PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE FT.HON.EDWARD HEATH MP
TO MR LIAM COSGRAVE TD

Thank you for your message of 26 November. I understand arrangements have now been made for officials to meet in Dublin on Wednesday morning.

I would like to suggest, if it is not inconvenient, that the discussions between ourselves and representatives from Northern Ireland should start da day later than we had originally proposed, namely on Thursday, 6 December. We would expect the talks to go on during Friday, 7 December and if necessary on the morning of Saturday, the 8th.

Our two Governments will, of course, as you say, participate in ~~in~~ the discussions on an equal footing since sovereign governments are always by definition in a relationship of equality. I do not think this should give rise to any difficulties about sponsorship. Those taking part would simply be informed of the date and place of the meeting. In this way we can avoid any suggestion of the host government being in any kind of superior position.

As to the chairmanship, I do not think it would be practical to find a suitable EEC statesman in the time available and indeed even if we could it might create the impression in some quarters that we could not get together without a third party presiding over our deliberations.

When we talked at Baldonnell we both said that we would be willing to take part in discussions, though we were then thinking of the "Tripartite Conference" itself. I would in fact like to attend the talks next week for at least part of the time and I expect you would like to do the same. I would propose that I should take the chair and that when we are not there the Foreign

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and Commonwealth Secretary should take over. In this we are following the normal international diplomatic practice under which the host government takes the chair. We will make sure that the seating arrangements are such as to demonstrate the equality of the sovereign governments taking part and indeed that the representatives from Northern Ireland are not made to feel in any way inferior.

I would be very glad if you were able to accept an invitation to dine at 10 Downing Street together with the other participants on the evening of the first day of the talks, Thursday 6 December.

28 November 1973

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