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AN ROINN GNÓTHAI EACHTRACHA  
Department of Foreign Affairs

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Dublin 2.

DATE: 12/4/92

TO: EC Division

FOR: AUNE BRONNIGAN

FROM: Kieran Dowling, Anglo-Irish Division  
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MESSAGE:

I would like to turn now to the implications which the various steps being taken towards a European Union have for relations within our own island.

I believe strongly that our shared identity as fellow citizens of the new Europe will lay the foundations for the new Ireland towards which all our efforts must be directed.

As John Hume has often pointed out, current developments on the European stage have a profound bearing on the nature of the problem which we must address. In the Europe which is being built at present - indeed, in the world at large, where political and economic interdependence are inexorably increasing - the traditional concept of a nation State exercising absolute and undivided sovereignty over its own affairs is being re-examined. Barriers of all kinds are coming down and will continue to come down. There is a growing acceptance that, in the face of at times dramatic political and economic change, a country's interests may best be served if it shares with like-minded partners sovereignty over areas of policy which it has traditionally reserved exclusively to itself.

This principle of interdependence in a broad European context is of profound significance for relations between the two parts of this island. In the years ahead, our common European identity will, I hope, cause the removal of fiscal and trade barriers to be followed by the disappearance of the psychological barriers between North and South. A steady increase in cross-border trade, accompanied by the elaboration of cross-border economic and social policies of benefit to us all, should help to break down the barriers of suspicion which have for too long prevented Ireland, North and South, from realizing its full economic potential. Our joint participation in the building of the European Union should

also strengthen the bonds between us and open up many avenues for joint action.

The Government are taking the lead in the efforts to promote greater cross-border economic co-operation. Over the past two years we have significantly expanded the role of the Anglo-Irish Conference in this field, and I intend to explore ways in which this work might be further strengthened. Relevant technical Ministers, North and South, have taken part in discussions in the Conference on the scope for co-operation across a wide range of areas. Last month, for example, we had a very useful discussion of the potential for North/South trade, and the implications of the Single Market for the island of Ireland.

You will also be aware that, as he announced recently, the Taoiseach intends to publish shortly a study on the prospects for North - South economic co-operation against the background of the Single Market, as a stimulus to intensified contacts and discussions.

In addition to the work which is being undertaken by Government or by official bodies, a number of independent agencies are making important contributions in the area of North/South economic co-operation.

The International Fund for Ireland is making a particularly valuable contribution through its support for projects such as: the joint CII/CBI initiative to promote job creation by removing obstacles to North/South trade; the Mentor and ACUMEN business development programmes; and the Derry/Galway/Boston Ventures. A number of other professional and voluntary agencies, such as the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland, the Institute of Directors, and Co-operation North, are also very active in this area.

Other contributions have come from the Culliton Report (which includes recommendations of relevance to the North) and from the Chairman of the Ulster Bank, Dr. George Quigley, who presented some very interesting ideas recently on the development of Ireland as an island economy.

In sum, support is growing for the concept of the island of Ireland as a single economic unit whose potential should be developed on that basis. I very much welcome and agree with this thinking.

I am also conscious of the wider benefits which increased business co-operation between North and South can bring in terms of improved mutual understanding and trust, an essential ingredient in the search for a lasting political accommodation on this island.