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FROM: P N BELL
BRITISH SECRETARY
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DESK IMMEDIATE

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Semple
Mr Thomas
Mr Steele
Mr Leach
Mr McCusker
Mr Stephens
Mr Watkins
Mr Beeton
Mr Brooker
Mr Ferguson
Mr Hill
Mr Maccabe
Mr Fisher
Mr Reid, Press Office
HMA, Dublin
Mr Fergusson, RID
Mr Warner

Jaqueline
Mr McCusker
Mr [unclear]
Mr [unclear]
LD6/3

MR KELLY (B&L)

IGC - "ROLLING THE PITCH"

Your arrival emboldens me to raise one informational matter where, we have tended to leave the running to the Irish Government. In preparation for meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference they have generally tried to create expectations of outcomes, highlight the main points on which their Ministers would focus, in short they have "rolled the pitch" in the interests of their own team. I wonder whether or not we could not ourselves do better in future, beginning with the IGC in Dublin this Thursday?

2. The problem is that IGCs are not what they were. When NIO and Irish Ministers met infrequently; when the modern AI relationship was just being formed; then they were

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major events in the political calendar. Now, we enjoy (enjoy?) Ministerial colloquy on a virtual daily basis in Castle Buildings; the novelty - and indeed, usually, the high political passion - of the marriage has worn off.

3. So I have little to suggest about where we might go this week that we have not gone already except by emphasising that we shall be using the IGC to:

- recruit the Irish to our programme of intensified momentum in the Talks process; or
- deny that there is a rift between us over the Parades Commission, while doing our best to boost that troubled Body.

4. In other words, almost, business as usual topped up, perhaps by a modest boost, in the wake of President Santer's visit, to our work in promoting cross-border co-operation in regard to EU matters (our social and economic item on the IGC Agenda).

5. None of this is exactly "hold the front page" stuff. But the IGC's main function now is a "political theatre" so it may be worth a little trouble to get the advertising right in advance. The briefing material we have circulated may give you some ideas; the Secretary of State's own briefing meeting tomorrow may give you more; and I am always at the end of a telephone waiting to help.

Signed:

P N BELL

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01232-427532 Ext 302

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