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Message from An Taoiseach,
Mr. Charles J. Haughey, T.D.,
to the leader of the SDLP, Mr. John Hume, M.P., M.E.P.,
on the occasion of the 20th Annual Party Conference

16 November, 1990.

Mr. John Hume, M.P., M.E.P.,
Leader,
Social Democratic and Labour Party.

For the past twenty years, the Social Democratic and Labour Party has made an enormous contribution to political life on this island. Throughout those years, your members have shown unrelenting courage and an unwavering commitment to peace, equality and the achievement of a better life for all.

This week marked an important milestone in the Anglo-Irish Agreement - the fifth anniversary of its signature. The Agreement has not only endured but been significantly strengthened over these five years. It has proved its value both at times of crisis in Anglo-Irish relations and also as a mechanism which enables the two Governments to address the full range of issues affecting the daily lives of the people of Northern Ireland. The past five years have been ones of sustained effort and a worthwhile level of achievement; our task is now to build on the foundations which have been established during those years.

In the year immediately gone by, your party - under the dedicated leadership of John Hume with the able assistance of his parliamentary colleagues, Seamus Mallon and Eddie McGrady - has shown its willingness to contribute to the efforts to achieve further political progress. We fully share your readiness to explore all avenues which offer genuine prospects for finding a way forward.

The achievements of the SDLP are not confined to the local or national stage; the Party has also demonstrated a positive and imaginative approach to European integration. That wider perspective is immensely important; we deeply share your hope that, within Europe, it will prove possible to define a better future for all the people of the island.

On behalf of the Government, I salute your record over the past twenty years and express our solidarity and support for your continuing work.