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From the Assistant Private Secretary

13 February 2003

Dear Anna,

### IRAQ: HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

The Prime Minister chaired a meeting on Iraq humanitarian issues on 13 February. The Foreign, Defence and Development Secretaries, CDS, Sally Morgan, Alastair Campbell, Jonathan Powell and David Manning participated.

The Defence Secretary briefed on his visit to the US.

1. The Development Secretary underlined the principle that military assets should not be used for humanitarian operations and described the scale of the humanitarian crisis (60% of the population were reliant on the Oil for Food programme). The NGOs would want to see a UN role.

The Prime Minister asked whether the UK should take the lead on humanitarian action in the southern zone. The Development Secretary was in favour: the UK could do an "exemplary job" in the zone on both military and humanitarian fronts.

The Prime Minister concluded that:

- (a) The UN must play a key role, both to reassure the NGOs and also for political reasons, to avoid the impression of a US take-over of Iraq. He asked DFID, FCO and MoD to coordinate advice so that he could discuss with President Bush.
- (b) We should seek to take the lead on humanitarian issues in the southern zone of Iraq.
- (c) We must work up a strategy for mobilising other contributors on the humanitarian side: France and Germany could play a role, as could Japan. The Development Secretary said that the US was already asking for

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contributions. The UN had an effective appeals system, refined after Afghanistan: this would help involve the Arabs.

Other key points:

- The Foreign Secretary stressed the need to focus international discussion on post-Saddam options: this would underline his appalling record of repression and mass murder and the need for him to go.
- The Development Secretary noted that the humanitarian situation was markedly worse in the areas Saddam controlled than those he did not. The conclusion was inescapable: the difference was directly attributable to Saddam.
- The Development Secretary commented that UN sanctions on Iraq had been envisaged as temporary, until Saddam had complied fully with UN resolutions. If he had cooperated, there would not have been a protracted humanitarian crisis. This illustrated the lengths to which Saddam would go to retain WMD.

I am copying this to Kara Owen (FCO), Peter Watkins (MoD), Alastair Campbell, and Sir Stephen Wall.

Yours ever

*Signed : Nicholas Cannon*  
13/02/2003

NICHOLAS CANNON

Anna Bewes, DFID

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