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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 September 1982

Prime Minister

Mr 2/4.

Dear John,

Future of Hong Kong

Thank you for your letter of 9 September about the Special Study on Hong Kong, which inter alia asked for the texts of British statements of commitment to Hong Kong.

I enclose some recent examples.

Yours ever
John Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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HMG'S COMMITMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG

1. Lord Trefgarne in the House of Lords on 13 February 1981:
'On the one hand, there is our commitment to the territory [of Hong Kong], which has been announced before today from this Box, and I confirm it again now.'

2. Lord Trefgarne in the House of Lords on 24 February 1981:
'I should like to end on a simple and straightforward point. The ultimate responsibility of the good government of Hong Kong and the protection and well-being of its people rests with Her Majesty's Government here in London, and specifically with my noble Friend, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. I reaffirm our commitment to that constitutional position tonight.'

3. Lord Carrington at a Press Conference in Hong Kong on 31 March 1981:
'The second purpose of the visit is to demonstrate, and reaffirm, the unshakeable commitment of the British Government to the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong'.

'I can't emphasise strongly enough the commitment that Britain has to Hong Kong'.

4. Mr Raison in the House of Commons on 4 June 1981:
'It is a fact that nothing in the [Nationality] Bill changes the relationship and commitment of Her Majesty's Government to the people of Hong Kong. I gladly give that assurance.'

5. Lord Trefgarne in the House of Lords on 13 October 1981:
'I want first to make it clear that the Government are no less determined than my noble friend to maintain present links between Hong Kong and the people of the United Kingdom and to do everything we possibly can to ensure that the people of the territory understand beyond peradventure that our affection for them and our concern for their welfare are not transient things but permanent

in every sense of the word. There is no question of this Bill having the slightest adverse effect on our relationships or our ties. Indeed, it is a source of great satisfaction to us that there exists in Hong Kong such a strong feeling of the need to maintain and even to strengthen the links which exist between us. May I quote the words of my right honourable friend the Home Secretary when he said in another place in 28 January:

'We are aware of the strength of feeling in Hong Kong on the need to maintain the ties between the Territory and the United Kingdom. I should like to reaffirm that the proposed legislation is in no way intended to weaken those links, to which we attach great importance.'

'I welcome this opportunity to reaffirm that relationship, and that it is as important as ever to Her Majesty's Government. As I have made clear, the Government opposed the Gibraltar amendment precisely because we believe that all citizens of the British dependent territories should be treated uniformly, but its passage against our advice does not alter in any way our obligations to the people of Hong Kong and the other dependent territories'.

6. Mr William Whitelaw in a letter to Sir Paul Bryan following an exchange in the House of Commons on 27 October 1981:

'I was glad that you said that you realised that any concern in Hong Kong about the Bill was probably based on a misunderstanding of the very real sense of commitment to Hong Kong which this Government feels. As you know, I have myself underlined in Parliament the importance of that commitment to Her Majesty's Government: and other Ministers have frequently done the same. The British Nationality Bill does not effect Her Majesty's Government's relationship with Hong Kong or the strength of the Government's support for that or any other Dependent Territory.'

7. Lord Belstead in the House of Lords on 19 May 1982:

'I see no cause for any lack of confidence in the future of Hong Kong. Her Majesty's Government's commitment to the territory and the interests of the people remains undiminished.'