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EUROPEAN COUNCIL BRUSSELS: 12/13 JULY

ADDENDUM TO BRIEF ON DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY

Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office

INTRODUCTION

1. After a meeting of the Danish Parliamentary Market Committee on 7 July the Danish Government may be unable to accept any formula on seats at the European Council. In particular the Committee reacted strongly against the UK variant, insisting that Denmark should have more seats than Ireland.

ADDITIONAL SPEAKING NOTE

2. (If the Danes say ~~that~~ they are unable to accept any formula on seats at this meeting.) We have all set ourselves the aim of settling this question at this meeting. It will be most unfortunate if the European Council could make no progress on it. If we can find a solution which is acceptable to all the other Member States I hope that the Danish Prime Minister will be prepared to go back to his Parliamentary Committee with it.

3. (Should the Danes insist that they must have more seats than Ireland.) Parity between Denmark and Ireland is one of the features of the existing Treaty. Our variant followed the first Luxembourg Presidency proposal in grouping Member States according to size in the same way as the Treaty (Luxembourg; Ireland and Denmark; Belgium and the Netherlands; the four larger Member States).

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## BACKGROUND

4. The Danish Government failed to get any clear mandate from their Parliamentary Market Committee at its meeting on 7 July in favour of any particular distribution of seats. We do not know how Danish Ministers will play their hand but they may feel they cannot accept any formula at the European Council. Mr Noergaard has sent a message saying there was no possibility of his accepting the UK variant; this is because the Venstre Party, on whose support the minority Government relies, is strongly against a formula giving Denmark 14 seats on a par with Ireland. This is definitely a step backwards in the Danish position. Though there has always been an element of uncertainty as to the Government's position vis à vis the Parliamentary Market Committee, we understood Mr Noergaard to say at Senningen on 12 June that they could accept anything that had unanimous approval. At earlier stages in the discussion the Danes have said they could accept the French proposal to retain existing numbers or the Assembly's own proposal. We also understand that the Market Committee at an earlier stage authorised the Danish Government to accept the Luxembourg formula (which gives Denmark and Ireland 14) in the last resort, but we cannot quote this.

5. It is desirable to reach a settlement at this meeting both in Community terms and because as long as it is unsettled this problem will continue to give us domestic difficulty. If needs be we should try to persuade the Danes to join in seeking a solution on an ad referendum basis.

6. The Danes are in any case likely to try for more seats than our variant would give them. If they combine forces with Ireland and the Netherlands there will be considerable pressure to accept a solution based on the second Luxembourg Presidency proposal rather than the first i.e. a graded reduction for the smaller Member States. A compromise, which seems very likely to be tried out, would be to take the second Luxembourg Presidency proposal for the five smaller Member States and to give 78 seats to the four larger Member States as in our proposal. It is a matter for political judgement whether the ratio this would give between Scotland (9) and Ireland (15)/Denmark (16) is within the margin of what is acceptable.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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