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Chairman

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Sir Geoffrey Littler KCMG
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15 June 1988

Sir Geoffrey

TORONTO SUMMIT: DRUGS

You mentioned to me the other day the likely US initiative and I have now seen your minute of 6 June to Peter Middleton. You may like to have my reactions.

2. In general, while we must obviously support the spirit of the initiative, I would counsel some caution. The role of the proposed "task force" is not entirely clear and I am a little concerned that it would cut across or duplicate other initiatives currently well advanced, and thus turn out to be counter productive. A number of countries might well view the new proposal as yet another piece of window-dressing put on by the Americans for domestic reasons. In consequence, pressure for something to be seen to happen quickly as a result of these proposals is unlikely to be too well received when so many existing and well-established channels are already seen to be producing results. In the current climate of the Customs Co-operation Council, sponsorship by the Americans is often enough to sink a project.

3. To illustrate the variety of current initiatives, there is already a wide range of co-operative ventures in the drugs field, including activities specifically aimed at the assets of drug traffickers. These include:-

- the various activities under the aegis of the Customs Co-operation Council, of which the USA is an active member;
- the UN Convention against Drug Trafficking (again, the USA is very active in all the working groups which include those looking at tracing, freezing and confiscating assets);

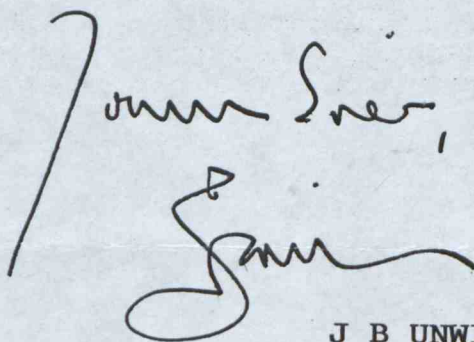
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- European ventures such as the Trevi and Pompidou Groups;
- Bilateral agreements (such as the one we have already signed with the USA and those that are under active discussion with others including Australia, Canada, Bahamas, and Jamaica).

4. At working level we, together with other departments, are in constant touch with the enforcement agencies of other countries encouraging inter alia the introduction of legislation similar to our Drug Trafficking Offences Act and assisting in the provision of training and technical aids. I have recently, for example, been considering with Patrick Wright and Clive Whitmore whether we could see our way to set up a small training unit in my Department for overseas drugs preventive and investigation officers (I am sympathetic in principle, but I do not at present have spare resources and it is not my top priority). With our network of Drugs Liaison Officers in a number of our Embassies, we also have excellent opportunities both for the accumulation of international intelligence and co-operation with the authorities of source and transit countries.

5. So although I do not want to put an unreasonable dampener on the proposal, and I can see its immediate political attractions, I think we need to be satisfied that it is really well thought out and likely to command wider support before we invest too many resources in it (with a potential opportunity cost to other current activities). If, however, you are satisfied that it is a genuine runner, and deserves positive support, I am content that Rachel Lomax should be designated as our financial representative and I should be glad to give what support we can. We have considerable expertise in this area (including a special unit concerned with financial investigation and asset confiscation) and the appropriate contacts would be Dick Lawrence, our Chief Investigation Officer, and Dennis Walton, the Head of CDB Division.

6. I am copying this letter to Peter Middleton.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J B Unwin', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the typed name 'J B UNWIN'.

J B UNWIN