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My ref:

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7 April 1989

Dear Charles,

CD 7/4

*File with CD
(PTE)*

The Foreign Secretary is in touch with his Dutch opposite number about the follow up to the recent Environment Conference in The Hague. The Secretary of State has therefore agreed that a draft reply from the Prime Minister to Mr Lubbers' letter of 20 March, which you sent us on 23 March, should be submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Secretary of State has, however, commented that in his view the reply, while friendly and positive in tone, should not be too kind about the Hague Declaration. It may be a considerable improvement on the first draft we saw but it still contains unacceptable elements. It appears from statements since the declaration was published that the French at least have by no means given up their aspirations for a new UN institution, linked with the International Court of Justice, which will have powers to impose sanctions and levy compensation payments.

It may be that the sponsors of the follow-up meeting of officials in Paris, which is promised for early May, will not invite countries who are not prepared publicly to support the Declaration. In that case the United Kingdom can stay away with good reason and be in a position to promote its own ideas for international environmental co-operation, primarily based on strengthening UNEP. The Secretary of State thinks that would be the best outcome at this stage from our point of view. If however, we are invited, and if the Prime Minister agrees that we should be represented, he feels that we must spell out clearly and beforehand the basis of our participation. This would be that while we fully share the environmental concerns of those who signed up to the Declaration we see dangers of the exercise leading to costly and divisive diversions from tackling the main global issues. The purpose of any UK involvement would be to help bring the exercise back into the main stream of political action where all countries could put their views, not just an exclusive group. The French, Dutch and Norwegian sponsors might not be able to accept such a clear statement of intent, in which case we could let it be known why we were not attending. The Secretary of State feels that this would on the whole be better than simply

refusing as a matter of principle, which could well be interpreted as mere pique.

A copy of this letter goes to Bob Peirce (FCO), Neil Thornton (DTI), Carys Evans (Chief Secretary's Office) and John Fairclough (Chief Scientific Adviser).

Yours sincerely,

CEJ Bush

KATE BUSH
Private Secretary

ENV AFFAIRS: Acid Rain PPS

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M.L.P.