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Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Michael Gove MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary
of State for Justice

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights
Committee Office
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Per Harman,

THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR A BILL OF RIGHTS

Thank you for your letter of 4 November. Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment to the Chair of the Committee. I look forward to working with you, your Committee and all the other relevant parliamentary Committees over the coming Parliament, especially as the Bill of Rights is developed.

Your letter raises a number of issues in relation to the Bill of Rights and the forthcoming consultation. This government was elected with an explicit mandate to reform and modernise the UK human rights framework. Our proposals will protect our fundamental rights, prevent abuse of the system and restore some common sense to our human rights laws. We have been clear that the Bill of Rights will remain faithful to the basic principles which we signed up to in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). We are confident that we can make progress from within the ECHR. Our Bill of Rights will be based on Convention rights, while also taking into account our common law tradition, and making clear where the balance should lie between Strasbourg and British courts. While we want to remain part of the ECHR, we would not stay in at any cost and our plans are aligned to that objective.

We are committed to consulting fully on our proposals prior to the introduction of any legislation. The consultation on our proposals will launch in due course and we will notify the Committee when it does. We will adhere to the consultation principles published by the Cabinet Office and I will provide resources to facilitate a thorough, transparent and productive exercise with a wide stakeholder group.

The implications of a Bill of Rights on devolution are being considered as we develop our proposals and we will fully engage with the devolved administrations. The government has and will continue to work with devolved administrations to deliver a modernised and reformed human rights framework for all of the United Kingdom. Our formal consultation will cover all citizens of the United Kingdom, including devolved institutions, assemblies and governments.

I welcome all submissions from the Committee as part of this consultation process.

M. Gove

MICHAEL GOVE