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Re VB.  
L03AHJ

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

18 July 1985

1986 UK PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMUNITY: SITE AND DATES  
OF EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Thank you for your letter of 15 July about the site and the dates for the European Council during the United Kingdom Presidency.

The Prime Minister agrees that the Council should be held in the new International Conference Centre and to the dates of 5/6 December.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield and David Williamson (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Len Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Prime Minister

You are asked to

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

agree:

- Yes  
Mr  
Presidency should be held in the new International Conference Centre, and  
15 July 1985  
Dear Charles, Saturday, to minimize traffic disruption).  
CDD 16/7.

1986 UK Presidency of the Community: Site and Dates of European Council

As the Portuguese finally decided not to seek the Presidency of the EC next year, our own tenure is thus fixed for the second half of 1986. The centrepiece of the Presidency will be the European Council. The purpose of this letter is to seek the Prime Minister's agreement that the working sessions of the European Council should take place in the new International Conference Centre (ICC), and to seek her agreement, at least on a provisional basis, to one of two possible dates. This will enable us to reserve the ICC and to advise Buckingham Palace, since it is customary for The Queen to give lunch to members of the European Council on the first day.

Site

The 1981 London European Council took place in Lancaster House, which provided a prestigious and reasonably convenient setting. Unfortunately Lancaster House would be unable to house the event, since the accommodation used for delegation offices will have reverted to St James's Palace and would not in any event be adequate in the new Community of 12.

The Foreign Secretary therefore recommends that the 1986 European Council should be held at the ICC, which is expected to be ready for use in April 1986. The arguments in favour are strong:

- (a) The PSA and their architect have been careful to design the ICC in such a way that it can accommodate European Council meetings, and have consulted the Department regularly in order to ensure that they understand how a European Council works. The ICC therefore is well-adapted to the purpose; and its equipment and furnishing should reflect credit on British industry.
- (b) Because the cost of building the ICC is being met from public funds, the Government would be open to criticism from Parliament and press if the European Council were to take place elsewhere. Furthermore,

/adapting



adapting any other location to the purpose would inevitably incur additional expenditure which will not be necessary in the case of the ICC.

- (c) Holding the European Council in the ICC will give it a welcome boost in its efforts to attract private sector business.

#### Dates

It has become the pattern for European Councils in the second half of the year to take place at the end of November or the beginning of December. The European Council needs to be fairly near to the end of the Presidency in order to mark its culminating point. But the dates chosen need to allow time for immediate follow up work, eg by Foreign Ministers, before the Christmas break, and for the Prime Minister to report to the December sitting of the European Parliament.

As to choice of day an important consideration will be to minimise the disruption to traffic in Westminster which the event will certainly cause, which will in turn make access to the ICC awkward for participants. We therefore suggest that it should take place on a Friday/Saturday, following the pattern of recent European Councils, including that at Milan. These days will also have the advantage of avoiding clashes with Cabinet meetings. (The Dutch do hold their Cabinet meetings on Fridays but seem to be able to finish in time to arrive for lunch.)

In practice, therefore, the choice of dates may be between 28/29 November and 5/6 December. We understand that The Queen has no lunchtime engagement on 28 November nor on 5 December. The Foreign Secretary recommends choosing the December dates, allowing a little more time for preparation. It would be helpful if the Prime Minister were able to express a preference between these dates, so that we can make a reasonably firm booking with the ICC, subject to the agreement of other Member States to the dates. The ICC are naturally keen to start taking bookings from the private sector during the Presidency period at times when their facilities are not required by HMG.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretary to Sir Robert Armstrong and to David Williamson.

*Yours ever,*

*Len Appleyard*

(L V Appleyard)