



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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SECRET

DRAFT NOTES OF OPENING MEETING OF STRAND TWO, LONDON, 6-8 JULY 1992

1. The Chairman, Sir Ninian Stephen, welcomed the delegations and introduced himself and Mr George Thompson, his Private Secretary. He said that it was a great honour for him to have been asked to participate in the Talks Process to which he brought the good wishes of both sides of the Australian Parliament and a great number of the people of Australia, many of whom have close links with both Great Britain and Ireland. Indeed, many people on every continent had close links with Ireland and they too anxiously awaited the outcome of the talks. This placed a heavy responsibility on each of those present.

2. Sir Ninian outlined how he saw his function as Chairman. His aim was to ensure, with the guidance of the Business Committee, that everything possible would be done to assist in the discussions. His role would be primarily a facilitating one and, while he would sometimes make procedural suggestions, both the procedures and substance would be for the parties to decide. Everyone should feel free to proffer suggestions at any stage. In carrying out his role as Chairman, Sir Ninian asked for the tolerance and understanding of all the delegations. His neutrality carried the disadvantage of lack of familiarity with matters which would be common knowledge to the delegates.

3. Referring to the aim of the 3 Strands of the Talks Process, Sir Ninian expressed the view that if the aim could be achieved, generations yet unborn would look back on the talks in hand as historic and would be grateful to all involved. More specifically, he reminded the delegates of the aims and ground rules of Strand 2 as set out in the agreed statement of 26 March 1991. In particular, he stressed that

each of the Parties could raise any aspect of the relationships within the island of Ireland, including constitutional issues. He also reminded all the Parties that nothing would be finally agreed in any Strand until everything was agreed in the Talks as a whole.

4. Sir Ninian felt that all the participants could approach Strand 2 with considerable, if guarded, optimism. Despite outstanding major differences in Strand 1, some agreement had emerged concerning a possible model for the future Governance of Northern Ireland.

5. Sir Ninian expressed the hope that the possible agenda for Strand 2, if agreed, would assist in reducing to an agreed text whatever areas of substantial agreement existed between the Parties. From that, it might be possible to define areas of unequivocal disagreement. The task would then be one of finding ways around those difficulties. This might best be done in small working groups.

6. Sir Ninian referred to the Procedural Guidelines which had already been agreed. He emphasised the need for all Parties to maintain the confidentiality of discussions. No public statement would be made without the prior agreement of every Party. A brief official statement would be agreed and issued to the media on each day on which talks were held.

7. The Chairman outlined the proposed order of business for the day. Sir Patrick Mayhew would deliver a brief report as Chairman of Strand 1 reporting on the progress in Strand 1. Then, he hoped the Agenda for Strand 2 could be adopted. If this were to be achieved reasonably quickly, and with the agreement of Parties, it might be possible to use the rest of the day for the making of opening presentations which were, in fact, scheduled for tomorrow. Sir Ninian proposed that, time permitting, the Alliance Party would present their statement - being the first in alphabetical order. Sir Ninian expressed the hope that opening statements would be positive rather than

critical analyses of the proposals of other parties. He hoped also that presentations could be based on what was realistically achievable. In this context, it was extremely important that confidentiality should be maintained so that each word need not be weighed to consider how it might be interpreted if it were reported out of context in the media. After each party had made its presentation, the parties would on Wednesday have the opportunity to express their reactions, speaking in reverse order to the initial presentations. This would also be the appropriate occasion for critical analyses of what others had put forward.

8. The Chairman did not feel that it would be productive in this 3-day session to have further debate by way of answers to the responses. In this way, attitudes would have been identified and issues defined. Parties would, of course, be free to ask questions when all parties had made their presentations or responses.

9. What would follow after the current plenary would depend very much on discussion up to that point. He assumed that a plenary session would be required to decide the order of work and the subjects which might be referred to working groups. The Chairman suggested that he could chair each of these working groups which would mean that only one could be held at any time. He expressed the view that groups should be kept as small as possible, but the final determination of these questions would be for the Business Committee and consensus decisions by all parties. Any party should feel free to call for an adjournment at any time and no party should ever feel that it was being pressured into doubtful assent to any proposition.

10. The Chairman expressed the hope that on the conclusion of responses on Wednesday it would be possible to have a short discussion regarding further talks as well as the appointment of the Business Committee. It was hoped that the meeting could determine the dates, location, duration and format of

the next phase of meetings and, for the longer term, ascertain the wishes of the Parties regarding timetables for the rest of July and thereafter. He suggested that Parties should give thought to these matters.

11. At this point, Sir Ninian allowed time for the Secretary of State, Sir Patrick Mayhew, and the Tanaiste, Mr Wilson to make an announcement on behalf of their 2 Governments. In the statement, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reaffirmed their support for all those involved in the Talks and sent their best wishes to the participants. They expressed their gratitude to Sir Ninian Stephen for the role which he had agreed to perform. While not underestimating the complexity of the issues being addressed, this was clearly an opportunity for open and constructive dialogue on all the issues surrounding the problem. Both Governments stood ready to consider a new and more broadly based agreement or structure if this could be arrived at through discussion and negotiation. They wished the participants in Strand 2 every success in their endeavours.

12. Sir Patrick delivered his report on Strand 2.

13. Moving to Item 3 of the Agenda, the Chairman asked for any comments delegations had on the possible Agenda for Strand 2 drawn up at the meeting of 19 June 1992. Dr Paisley asked for clarification on the order in which it was envisaged opening statements would be made by the parties. Sir Ninian explained his proposal that statements be made in alphabetical order, the basis on which seating arrangements had been made. This would involve the Alliance Party opening the presentations this afternoon, if time permitted. Mr Hume intervened to suggest that certain delegations may have altered their titles with a view to influencing the order in which they made their presentations.

14. Mr Andrews stated that the Irish Government would prefer to wait until the opening of Tuesday morning's session to make its presentation. He also informed the meeting that his delegation had an extra time constraint as Irish Ministers would have to leave London by lunchtime on the third day, Wednesday, in order to be in Dublin for an address to the Oireachtas (Parliament) by the President of Ireland that afternoon.

15. In response to questions from Dr Paisley on the handling of questioning by delegations of opening statements, the Chairman stated that he understood that following the six opening statements there should be time for questions to be asked by each of the parties of each other. This would be followed by responses in written form. He urged again that delegations' presentations should not include criticisms of previous opening statements in their initial presentations and emphasised that no party should feel bound by its presentation as a complete expression of its views. New aspects of their views would undoubtedly arise as the process developed.

16. Mr Molyneux stated that all delegations were determined to make progress in Strand 2 and asked if it would be possible for the Irish Government delegation to

nominate someone to remain in London after Wednesday lunchtime to participate in a Business Committee, should the establishment of one be agreed. Mr Andrews stated that there would be no difficulty in having an official represent the Irish Government 'ad referendum' at any Business Committee.

17. Mr Robinson asked how it was envisaged that the business of the opening session, including questioning of opening presentations, could be included in three days or less. In response, the Chairman suggested that it might be necessary to continue the Plenary into Thursday subject to the building (Lancaster House) and delegations being available. Mr Flynn suggested that a 'question and answer' format would be cumbersome and stated that he would prefer to see general responses from parties on Wednesday with more detailed questions and answers being left to a subsequent session. Dr Paisley stated that the public was worried that the process might be running out of time. He suggested that the only practical way to proceed was to adopt the procedure used in Strand 1 whereby each party was cross-examined/questioned by the others immediately following its presentation to Plenary. He emphasised the need for clarity on proposals for the timing of future Strand 2 meetings so that parties could organise their diaries effectively.

18. Mr Hume returned to his statement that "the alphabet may have been fixed" to suit certain parties: he suggested that the DUP had altered its title to UDUP in order to influence the order in which it made its presentations. Mr Robinson and Mr Paisley stated that the Ulster Democratic Unionist Party was the official, registered name of the Party and that they had complied with seating arrangements which had been made independently of the parties. In response, the Chairman emphasised that he and Mr Thompson were solely responsible for seating arrangements based on alphabetical order. He suggested that this was not the time

for withdrawal of statements or accusations by delegations and then drew attention to the offer by Sir Patrick Mayhew to deliver the opening presentation of the British Government this afternoon, following the Alliance Party, if time permitted.

19. The Chairman then summed up suggestions made on the procedure for handling questions and responses:

- (1) Chairman's proposal: questions following the delivery of all six presentations followed by detailed responses, in written form.
- (2) Dr Paisley's proposal for detailed questions following individual presentations.
- (3) A proposal by Mr Flynn for a short general response by parties once all six presentations had been made with detailed questioning at a subsequent session.

20. Dr Paisley then suggested that a way out of the problem might be to invite the two Governments to deliver their presentations first. Mr Maginnis disagreed, stating that all delegations had come to the meeting on the understanding that they were on an equal footing. He emphasised the need for dialogue throughout the process and stated that meetings should not become occasions for exchange of discussion papers.

21. A discussion followed on whether delegations could, if necessary, be present or represented if the meeting were to continue on Thursday. All delegations stated that, although inconvenient, they could probably be represented on Thursday. Dr Alderdice stressed the importance of getting down to real business. Mr Hume agreed that the meeting should move as quickly as possible to the stage of delivery of opening presentations by the delegations. Mr Mallon suggested that it would not be possible to complete the

question and answer aspect of the discussion on presentations this week and proposed that it might be moved onto Item 6 of the agenda.

22. The Chairman reminded the delegations that the agenda items under discussion was the approval of the agenda for Strand 2 and asked whether the draft of 19 June could now be agreed. The agenda was approved unanimously. He proposed a short adjournment to allow delegations to consider the handling of presentations and responses following which it should hopefully be possible to begin presentations with the Alliance Party. All delegations then indicated that they would be in a position to deliver their presentations in alphabetical order depending on time constraints.

23. The Chairman reported on the availability of Lancaster House for the remainder of the week indicating that it would be available until Thursday afternoon. On procedural matters, he suggested a 5.30 pm adjournment and it was also agreed that the session on Tuesday morning would commence at 9.15 am.

24. Dr Paisley raised a point of order at this stage and requested that Mr Hume withdraw an earlier statement made in connection with the official name of his party. He referred to the Secretary of State's statement in the House of Commons on the 26 March 1991, in which the official title of his party was clearly established for the purposes of these discussions. Mr Hume indicated that his statement was not meant to be taken as a complaint.

25. Dr Alderdice then made a presentation on behalf of the Alliance Party (copy attached at Annex II). The Chairman called upon Mr Wilson to give the presentation on behalf of the Irish Government (copy attached at Annex III).

26. At the conclusion of the Irish Government's presentation, Dr Paisley raised a further point of order, enquiring whether or not a copy of the statement would be made available to all parties. He indicated that he had not entered into the discussions on the understanding that any of the Strands would involve the renegotiation of the Union and that Unionists would not be party to this. Mr Wilson indicated that a copy of his submission would be available.

27. The Chairman then invited Mr Hume to deliver his presentation on behalf of the SDLP (copy attached at Annex IV). At the conclusion of Mr Hume's presentation, the Chairman enquired if copies of his statement would be available to the parties. Mr Hume said that they would.

28. As the UDUP were not ready to deliver their statement, the Chairman invited Sir Patrick Mayhew to make his presentation on behalf of the UK Government (copy at Annex V).

29. The Chairman then called on Mr Molyneaux to make the presentation on behalf of the UUP. Mr Molyneaux explained that Mr Maginnis would make the presentation on behalf of his party but that a typed copy was not yet available. In view of the time constraints, Mr Maginnis indicated that he would prefer to wait until the next session and the Chairman agreed.

30. The Chairman advised that photocopying facilities were available to the delegations and requested that copies of all presentations be circulated. Discussion continued on the issuing and photocopying of statements. Mr Hume said that he had no objection to the circulation of the statements given but considered that the statements of all the participants should be circulated at the same time.

31. Discussion turned to the draft press release which was agreed except that Mr Wilson suggested that the names of all members of the delegations be given. Dr Paisley advised that it was not UDUP practice to publish the names of their delegations, normally only giving the name of the leader. Sir Patrick Mayhew suggested that the two Government should list their full delegations whilst, in the case of the parties, the names of the leaders would be sufficient. This was agreed.