



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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(30 June)

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37. It remains the joint wish of both Governments to relaunch the process of political dialogue, as was confirmed in the recent Summit meeting in London. In saying that, I must recognise that the positions taken by the unionist parties are not particularly encouraging at present. In some cases at least, they seem to insist that a precondition for even going to the table is the prior resolution, on unionist terms, of the very issue which is at the root of the problem and the inevitable centre-piece of any future negotiations, namely the rival perspectives of the two communities on the constitutional issue. Negotiations to address merely the consequences of a unionist victory on this issue are likely to be just as unacceptable and unenticing to nationalists as the reverse would be to unionists. It is difficult to believe that those who assert these preconditions for Talks harbour any illusion on this point.
38. The two Governments, as co-sponsors of the Talks, will continue their efforts to persuade the parties to return to the table on the open-ended and three stranded basis agreed in the statement of March 26th 1991. I believe all political leaders share a responsibility to respond as constructively as possible. No one is exempt from the duty to participate in the search for progress which all, without exception, agree is necessary.
39. For my own part I have tried as best I can to reassure people, as indeed the Programme for Government makes clear, that in any resumed Talks this Government will not be found wanting in its efforts to secure a genuine meeting of minds, and the fair and balanced compromise which is indispensable for a lasting settlement. No task is more pressing to me or to the Irish Government and no objective more worthwhile. I sought my present role in Government in order to make my own contribution in this area and I see it as a profound personal responsibility to use all the resources at my

disposal to find an answer to the tragedy of Northern Ireland. There is now in place in Ireland a Government with both the commitment and the authority to come to grips decisively with the issues involved. I would appeal to unionist leaders not to disregard the hand proffered to them.

40. If, in spite of our utmost efforts, we nevertheless fail to persuade all parties to return to the negotiating table, we will face a choice:
41. Both Governments are committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, unless and until it is transcended by new agreed arrangements.
42. We could acknowledge that no such new arrangements can be agreed at this point. In that case I believe we must examine how the Agreement can best be developed and adapted to meet this reality and avoid any danger of a political vacuum.
43. Alternatively we can examine ways in which the two Governments, acting in close consultation with each other, can best bring their resources to bear in a renewed search for a settlement. We can together identify the key elements which would need to be part of any new accommodation. We can present proposals to other participants on what we judge to be the right way forward. We can consider alternative ways in which progress might be made. I note that Mr. Molyneux, for his part, has consistently urged that it is for the two Governments themselves to sort out those elements which relate to their particular responsibilities. There are indeed many issues where the Governments have more scope for initiative and more room for manoeuvre than any of the Northern parties, and perhaps it is time to recognise this more clearly.