



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
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## Background Note

1. In a speech to the Irish Association on 5 March, the Tánaiste urged a new accommodation between the two traditions in Ireland and, inter alia, stated that "an accommodation on the constitutional issue, which allayed the deepest fears of both communities, would open the way for decisions on new structures which could be designed to match our complicated inter-relationships and therefore acceptable to all".

2. In Liverpool on 23 April, Sir Patrick Mayhew outlined what he saw as parameters for a new agreement. In his public response, the Tánaiste noted that the Secretary of State had "rightly reaffirmed the need for any talks to address comprehensively all of the relationships involved" and had emphasised that both traditions must be accorded parity of esteem in any settlement and that the validity of each tradition must receive unqualified recognition.

3. In a speech to the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body on 30 June, the Tánaiste stated, inter alia, that it remained the joint wish of both Governments to relaunch the process of political dialogue. In the event of failure to persuade all parties to return to the negotiating table, both Governments would face a choice: to acknowledge that no new arrangements could be agreed at this point and to examine how the Agreement could best be developed and adopted to meet this reality. Alternatively, both Governments could consider ways in which, acting in close consultation with each other, they could best bring their resources to bear in a renewed search for a settlement.

4. In an interview with the Guardian on 8 July, the Tánaiste stated inter alia, that "there is now a very real menace of a destabilising political vacuum . . . if it is not possible to restart the Talks, then the British and Irish Governments themselves must act". The Tánaiste was quoted in a report summarising the interview as indicating that without clear

evidence that the talks would restart by the late Summer, the two Governments should try to agree a framework settlement and that "ultimately an agreement might have to be put directly to the people". The Tánaiste was quoted as indicating that concepts such a shared sovereignty in Northern Ireland "are very interesting ideas and deserve to be studied very closely". Discussion of the Tánaiste's interview and its implications dominated a meeting of the Inter-Governmental Conference also held on 8 July.

5. The UUP supported the Government in two House of Commons votes on 22 July on the Social Chapter of the Maastricht treaty and in a confidence vote on the following day. In the Conference debate, Prime Minister Major denied any "deal" with the UUP and said that "nothing was asked for, nothing was offered and nothing was given". In an RTE interview on 27 July, the Taoiseach stated that he accepted indications by the British Government that there had been no agreement on the establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland but "if it were to come into being . . . it would cut across and run contrary to the agreement of 26 March 1991", and would "tend to go a long way to undermine the Anglo-Irish Agreement".

6. At a meeting of the Inter-Governmental Conference in London of 10 September, both sides "reaffirmed their aim of a comprehensive political settlement which would address all the main relationships and agreed to continue to co-operate closely and actively to promote political progress by every possible means". It was confidentially agreed that the Liaison Group would begin work on a "Joint Framework Statement".

7. In recent weeks Minister Ancram has been conducting bilateral meetings with the Northern Ireland parties on the Prospects for a resumption of talks. These discussions have focused on Strand One issues.

8. Prime Minister Major met John Hume on 16 September to discuss prospects for a resumption of talks. A DUP delegation led by Dr. Paisley met Mr. Major on 17 September and handed over a party policy document.

9. In an interview with the Belfast Telegraph on 30 September, Sir Patrick Mayhew said that the "British Government is four-square behind the right of the people (of Northern Ireland) to determine the status of the province". In a speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 8 October, Prime Minister Major stated, inter alia, that Northern Ireland "is part of our democracy" and that the British Government would not "bargain away the people's democratic rights".

10. Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly on 1 October, the Tánaiste stated, inter alia, that the Irish Government "are willing to look afresh at our traditional assumptions and our relationships with others to see if there are new approaches which can open a way forward... We are ready to accept the need for radical and innovative compromise as part of a new accommodation".

11. Following a briefing by John Hume on 7 October on his discussions with Mr. Gerry Adams, the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste indicated in a statement that the Government "will... evaluate carefully the position conveyed to them, and consult with the Government, with a view to ensuring that it can make a very important contribution towards building a consensus for peace."

12. In a statement and subsequent press interviews on 11 October, the Rev. Martin Smyth indicated that Sinn Fein could have a seat at the Conference table following a permanent ceasefire and surrender of their weapons. The Taoiseach welcomed Rev. Smyth's comments as "constructive and helpful". In his speech to the UUP annual Conference on

16 October, Mr. Molyneaux stated that, after a PIRA cessation of violence, a "lengthy period of quarantine" would be required prior to giving Sinn Fein "access to the democratic processes".

13. In a speech at Bodenstown on 17 October, the Taoiseach stated that while the Hume-Adams talks had provided elements which might supply "an important basis for peace", it was for the two Governments to work together "to reach a common understanding in their own terms on a framework for peace, consistent with their international obligations and their wider responsibilities to both communities".

14. The House of Commons Procedures Committee on 27 October deferred to 24 November further consideration on establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. UUP sources subsequently indicated to the media that a final decision to establish the Committee may not be taken by the full House of Commons until early January.

15. Following the Shankill bombing of 23 October and subsequent Loyalist paramilitary murders, the Dáil on 28 October debated the situation in Northern Ireland. In his speech, the Tánaiste outlined six principles "which can underpin a peace process, and which can be combined through negotiation and dialogue to secure sustainable peace". Prime Minister Major stated in the House of Commons on 28 October that he had read the Tanaiste's speech with "great interest"

16. In Communique issued following their meeting en marge of the European Council on 29 October, the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister agreed inter alia, "that the two Governments must continue to work together in their own terms on a framework for peace, stability and reconciliation consistent with their international obligations and their wider responsibilities to both communities". They agreed that if and when "a renunciation of violence had been made and sufficiently demonstrated, new doors could open, and both

Governments would wish to respond imaginatively to the new situation which would arise".

17. In an RTE interview on 31 October, the Taoiseach said he and Prime Minister Major were quite prepared to take political risks "when we find the right formula". The Taoiseach emphasised that "only the two Governments can produce a framework for peace on their own terms".

Anglo-Irish Division

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