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Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

A/Sec O hUiginn

1. I attach a copy of the final version of the briefing note that it is proposed to issue to parties, as cleared this afternoon by the Taoiseach. It includes a number of relatively minor changes to the payment arrangements (these suggested by D/Finance). The note is being sent to parties this afternoon, together with a copy of the PQs' reply given by the Taoiseach in the Dáil on Wednesday.
2. The Taoiseach proposes to meet the party leaders next week. The tentative schedule is as follows (all meetings on bilateral basis):

<u>Tues. evening (18 Oct)</u>	FG, PDs, DL
<u>Wed. evening (19 Oct)</u>	Greens, Ind. Deputies, Ind. Senators
<u>Thurs. (20 Oct)</u>	11.00 Sinn Féin
	12.00 Alliance
	13.00 SDLP.

*Jic*

T O' Connor  
14 October 1994

cc PST/Mr Finlay  
PSS  
Joint Secretary  
Counsellors A-I  
Mr Montgomery

## Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

### Briefing Note on Proposed Arrangements

1. This note sets out in summary form the Government's proposals for various arrangements relating to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The note is being circulated to all parties who have accepted invitations to attend. The Government would welcome the views of parties on the arrangements proposed.

#### Terms of Reference

2. Revised draft Terms of Reference for the Forum are contained in the annex to this note. The revised version takes account of a number of the suggestions made by parties on the text originally circulated by the Taoiseach.

#### Composition/Level of Representation

3. It is proposed that the Forum have 35 full members and 26 alternate members and that the breakdown of seats between parties be as follows:

<u>Party</u>	<u>Full Members</u>	<u>Alternate Members</u>
Fianna Fáil	9	4
Fine Gael	6	3
Labour	5	2
Progressive Democrats	2	1
Democratic Left	1	2
Green Party	1	1
SDLP	5	5
Sinn Féin	3	2
Alliance	2	3
Independents	1	3
Total	<u>35</u>	<u>26</u>

4. As in the New Ireland Forum, it is proposed that alternate members would have the right to attend all sessions of the Forum. They would have the right to speak, however, only when replacing full members; otherwise, their rights would be as for full members.
5. In addition, it is proposed to have an Observer category of membership to facilitate smaller parties and perhaps other representative groups and bodies. While the composition of this category has not yet been finalised, it is proposed to invite the Workers Party to fill one of the seats in question. It is envisaged that Observer members would have the right to attend all sessions of the Forum. Other aspects of participation of Observer members are for further consideration and consultation.

Chairperson

6. The Government will convey shortly to parties for their views the name of the person whom they would propose to be Chairperson of the Forum.

Secretariat

7. It is proposed that the Secretariat be drawn from the public service sector. One of the proposed members will have a European Commission background. The Government will shortly convey to parties the names of the proposed members of the Secretariat.
8. It is envisaged that the Secretariat's functions and role will be closely modelled on that of the Secretariat of the New Ireland Forum.

Venue

9. The Government propose Dublin Castle as the venue for the Forum. The Secretariat's offices will also be located in Dublin Castle.

Duration/Frequency of Meetings

10. The Government's view is that the Forum should sit for as long as is necessary. This is an issue which can be reviewed again as circumstances dictate.
11. In regard to the frequency of meetings of the Forum, the Government propose that following the inaugural session, it should meet one day per week in the initial stages. The situation thereafter would be for review by the Forum itself in light of the prevailing circumstances.

Procedural Issues

12. As a non-negotiating, consultative body, the Government propose that the structures and working methods of the Forum should be such as to facilitate the widest possible level of open debate and dialogue. In the manner of the New Ireland Forum, it is proposed that the Forum avoid the adoption of detailed rules of procedure and allow decisions on operational matters to emerge by consensus.
13. To facilitate the smooth functioning of the business of the Forum, it is proposed that a Co-ordinating Committee of the Forum be established, comprising the Chairman and a representative of each party. Serviced by the Secretariat, and under the direction of the Plenary formation, this group would co-ordinate arrangements for such matters as the agenda of the Forum, its timetable and indeed any other issues relating to the effective functioning of the body.
14. While the primary instrument of the Forum would be the

Plenary formation, it would be open to it, if considered useful, to establish sub-committees to undertake specific assignments. These would also be serviced by the Secretariat.

15. Replicating another practice that worked well in the case of the New Ireland Forum, it is proposed that each party nominate a Delegation Secretary. This person would liaise with the Secretariat, ensuring effective communication between the latter and party delegations. It is proposed also that provision be made for the attendance at sessions, where requested by delegations, of a party special adviser.
16. It is proposed that there be a quorum for the Forum. The figure would be for decision at the first meeting of the Forum. As in the case of the New Ireland Forum, it is envisaged that the use of alternate delegates will ensure that the issue of the quorum will not arise frequently in practice.
17. Given the Government's strong desire that the Forum be an inclusive exercise - a view widely shared by parties - it is proposed that the Forum invite submissions from the public. It will be open to the Forum to receive these in written form and/or by means of a presentation in person before it. In addition to facilitating submissions from groups and individuals from the nationalist tradition, an important objective of this procedure will be to ensure the widest possible participation in the Forum process of voices from the unionist community.

#### Administrative Matters

18. The costs of administering the Forum will be carried by the Government. In respect of support to parties, the following arrangements are proposed:
  - Oireachtas members will be paid travel expenses and overnight subsistence (for those resident outside 10 miles of Leinster House) at Oireachtas rates for those sessions held on days when the Dáil, Seanad, or relevant Oireachtas Committees are not sitting, subject to no duplication of payments from public funds.
  - For non-Oireachtas members, it is proposed to pay travel and subsistence allowances at Civil Service rates in respect of attendance at Forum meetings. In addition, non-Members of Parliament will be paid an Attendance Allowance of £150 per sitting day in respect of attendance at Forum meetings. This allowance is intended to compensate for loss of

income arising from such attendance.

- Some parties have raised the question of public funding of support and research staff. In the case of the New Ireland Forum, £7,500 was made available to each of the parties to meet the cost of consultancy services. On the basis of this precedent, funding up to the level of the current equivalent, £11,400 per annum, will be payable, quarterly in advance, to the parties. Travel and subsistence costs of personnel contracted under this arrangement by the non-Oireachtas parties will also be paid (at Civil Service rates). Consideration is still being given to the question of additional funding for the Northern parties in respect of possible extra secretarial and/or administrative costs.
19. Each party will be assigned a delegation room in Dublin Castle for use on the days of meetings of the Forum. The question of additional office space for parties without a base in Dublin is still under examination. The Government will also endeavour to facilitate such parties in respect of office equipment etc to the extent possible.
- Media
20. It is proposed that a Press Officer be appointed to the Forum and work as a member of the Forum Secretariat. It is envisaged that the media will have access to all public sessions of the Forum.



Forum for Peace and Reconciliation  
Revised Draft Terms of Reference

The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is being established by the Government in accordance with their intentions as expressed in the Joint Declaration, for as long as is necessary, to consult on and examine ways in which lasting peace, stability and reconciliation can be established by agreement among all the people of Ireland, and on the steps required to remove barriers of distrust, on the basis of promoting respect for the equal rights and validity of both traditions and identities. It will also explore ways in which new approaches can be developed to serve economic interests common to both parts of Ireland, including in the framework of European Union. It will be a fundamental guiding principle of the Forum and of participation in it that all differences relating to the exercise of the right of self-determination of the people of Ireland, and to all other matters, will be resolved exclusively by peaceful and democratic means. The purpose of the Forum will be to provide, as far as possible, an opportunity to both major traditions as well as to others, to assist in identifying and clarifying issues which could most contribute to creating a new era of trust and co-operation on the island. Participation in the Forum will be entirely without prejudice to the position on constitutional issues held by any party.