



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/98/16

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

**Confidential**

Copy

PST; PSS; Ministers Owen,  
de Rossa & Taylor; Attorney  
General; Minister of State  
Coveney; Messrs. Teahon,  
Donlon & Dalton; Amb.  
London and Washington; Joint  
Secretary; Counsellors A-I.

46 30/4.

25

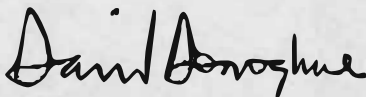
**Summary Report (29 July)**

1. The talks concluded tonight for the summer break. The Plenary has been adjourned until Monday 9 September.
2. The Government delegation today was led by the Tánaiste and also included the Minister for Justice, the Attorney General and Minister of State McManus.
3. Senator Mitchell had to leave for the U.S. in the afternoon to attend the funeral of his brother, who died over the weekend. He was replaced by Harri Holkeri for the remainder of today's proceedings.
4. The only positive achievements of the day were the adoption of the rules of procedure and the establishment of the Business Committee. Efforts to finalise the agenda for the remainder of the opening Plenary failed and this will be the first item of business when delegations return on 9 September.
5. The first part of this morning's Plenary went as planned. Senator Mitchell secured the unanimous adoption of the decision-making process described in paras 30-35 of the draft rules of procedure.
6. There followed the scheduled consideration of the DUP and UKUP amendments. Peter Robinson proposed the various DUP amendments, none of which were supported by other parties. The Chairman established by a show of hands in each instance that sufficient consensus existed for the rule as it stood, rather than for the proposed amendment, and the rule was duly adopted unamended.
7. The UKUP withdrew one of its two amendments and McCartney briefly proposed the remaining one. This was duly rejected in the same manner and the unamended rule adopted.
8. The Chairman then secured the unanimous adoption of the remaining draft rules. The final text of these is attached as Annex I. The description of these in the Chairman's initial version as having been adopted "unanimously" angered the DUP, particularly as a copy was leaked to the media. In this evening's resumed Plenary, they complained that, as they had not supported the rules to which they had proposed amendments, this was a misrepresentation. During the afternoon, the Chairman (Holkeri) deleted this disputed element from the heading of the text and re-circulated the latter in the attached form.
9. Paisley made a short statement this morning to place on record his understanding that the ground-rules did not govern this process nor bind the participants and that they were also not required to negotiate on topics other than those listed on the agreed agenda. McCartney and Trimble supported him.

10. This morning's Plenary also adopted the text of a resolution sought by the UKUP and established the Business Committee.
11. The Plenary adjourned at 11am for a round of bilaterals to seek a resolution of the difficulties created by Unionist efforts last Thursday to promote decommissioning at the expense of the other items on the draft agenda for the remainder of the opening Plenary.
12. With confirmation from the Secretary of State that the UUP position had not changed over the weekend, the two Governments agreed that it would be best to propose breaking now for the summer and resuming on 9 September, with an agenda for the opening Plenary which would cover opening statements, discussion of the comprehensive agenda, consideration of decommissioning (proposals and mechanisms), adoption of the comprehensive agenda and the parallel launching of three-stranded negotiations and establishment of agreed decommissioning mechanisms. This was agreed with the Chairmen.
13. A succession of bilateral contacts during the afternoon between the two Governments, the Chairmen and most delegations served to strengthen a broad consensus in favour of deferring the agenda discussion until after the summer recess and parking the process at this point.
14. Suspicions about Unionist intentions in relation to decommissioning deepened on receipt of a joint paper from the three Unionist parties which envisaged the establishment of the agreed decommissioning machinery before any consideration of the comprehensive agenda. The Unionists were also reported to be preparing a paper which would propose that the Business Committee would work on the comprehensive agenda during August - but in the event this did not appear.
15. The SDLP supplied the Chairman with a counter-proposal on the agenda which drew heavily on the two Governments' proposal of 6 June.
16. An informal paper which the British Government passed to us as a possible exit strategy for today made little attempt to disguise its paternity. Echoing a recent Trimble proposal for twin sub-committees on decommissioning and the comprehensive agenda (both to meet during August), the paper proposed that a sub-committee on decommissioning would be established today, would be available to meet from 2 September on and would be tasked to make proposals on the issues in relation to decommissioning which the Plenary would need to agree before the three-stranded negotiations were launched. It also envisaged the Business Committee meeting from 2 September to make recommendations to the Plenary on the comprehensive agenda.
17. In bilateral contact with the British Government, we made clear that this approach (which surpassed even Trimble's ambitions in terms of making a precondition of decommissioning) was unacceptable on various grounds and it was withdrawn.

3

18. The Plenary resumed at 6.45pm. Concluding that it would not be possible to reach agreement on the agenda in present circumstances, the Chairman (Holkeri) proposed an adjournment until 9 September. The Unionist parties expressed unhappiness and tried to use this to deflect recent criticism of them for wasting time. Robinson argued that the talks should continue indefinitely with a view to achieving agreement on the agenda.
19. Having canvassed views on this proposal, the Chairman asked for a show of hands. It was supported only by the three Unionist parties and the UDP and was, accordingly, defeated. He then invited a show of hands in support of his own proposal. Deciding rather hastily that the UUP had been among the supporters, he concluded that sufficient consensus had been established in favour of adjournment. Paisley subsequently challenged this and the Chairman was forced to acknowledge his error. During a short interval to clarify matters, the two Governments pointed out privately to him that the rules of procedure gave him clear powers in relation to both the adjournment and convening of meetings (qualified only by the need to have "due regard" to the views of the participants).
20. On the strength of this, the Chairman subsequently told the meeting that he intended to adjourn the Plenary until 9 September. This brought predictable Unionist protests but, when it was put to the test with a further show of hands, it was supported by all but the DUP.
21. Tonight's session also included Unionist challenges to the two Governments in relation to legislation on decommissioning as well as personal invective and procedural gamesmanship. As delegations departed for the summer break, accordingly, there was little to inspire confidence that the resumption of the talks in September would bring serious engagement on substance any closer.



David Donoghue  
29 July 1996