

Democratic Unionist Party



29th December 2003

Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Office
Castle Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3SG

Dear Sec. of State,

You asked for our views on the content and format of the forthcoming talks process.

We believe that the talks would be best divided into three sections. One strand would deal with the internal administration of Northern Ireland; a second dealing with relationships north-south and east-west and a third which would deal with all other issues.

In relation to each of these strands our prime focus would be on dealing with the government in bilateral format. Meetings between and among the parties would take place as the various parties see fit (some such meetings are being organised).

Democratic Unionist Party
91 Dundela Avenue
Belfast
BT4 3BU
Tel: (028) 90471155
Fax: (028) 90471797

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Our position and attitude to Sinn Fein is well known and is set out in our Assembly election manifesto. We will not be talking or negotiating with Sinn Fein.

When dealing with *Strand One* matters we would not be negotiating with the Government of the Irish Republic. In our view the Government of the Irish Republic should have no role whatsoever in *Strand One* matters. However, outside of *Strand One* matters, we shall meet with them separately and, when appropriate, together with HMG.

A report stage mechanism could be agreed at a later date if and when a shared understanding of any progress and future procedure is required.

We contend it is not necessary to place any limit on the size of negotiating teams (beyond what the issue, logistics and common sense might dictate). We are keen on maintaining the greatest possible involvement and understanding among our Assembly team.

We believe that the issues to be considered could be addressed under the following headings with an indication of what we would wish to see on the agenda for each of the areas.

Providing democratic, stable, accountable, effective and efficient devolved structures for Northern Ireland.

Issues to be addressed include,

- Number of Assembly Members.
- Number of Government Departments.
- Existence of Civic Forum.
- Scope of Powers Devolved.
- Operation of Assembly.
- Designations.
- Pledge of Office, Commitment to Exclusively Peaceful Means.
- Sanctions

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- Role and Composition of IMC.
- Accountability Mechanisms for executive power.
- Scope of the Review of Public Administration.

Ensuring that relationships with the Republic of Ireland are in the interests of, and accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and there is a clear factual recognition of the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.

Issues to be addressed include,

- Arrangements for formal co-operation between the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Republic of Ireland.
- Arrangements for any north-south bodies.
- Arrangements for relationships within the British Isles including formal co-operation between devolved administrations and other legislatures.

Ensuring that Northern Ireland is a fair, peaceful and prosperous society free from the fear of terrorism.

Issues to be addressed include,

- How Equality is defined and delivered.
- Ensuring provision for culture in Northern Ireland reflects the community.
- Delivering the best possible Policing.
- Ensuring the future of the RIR.
- Ensuring the Security of the people of Northern Ireland.
- How Human Rights are defined and delivered.
- Ensuring decommissioning.
- Providing for Innocent Victims.
- Border Poll.
- Redressing the imbalance in Government appointments.
- Addressing Northern Ireland's under-funding during the Troubles.

The issue of how any resolution to the talks process should be endorsed by the people of Northern Ireland should also be addressed.

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These are the main matters we would wish to discuss in the talks.
Should you require us to furnish you with further detail on any issue
we will be pleased to respond.

Wishing you a very happy and productive New Year.

Sincerely



**Ian R. K. Paisley MP, MEP, MLA
Leader, Democratic Unionist Party**

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