

# Office of the Independent Chairmen

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## MEMBERS

### MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 1998 AT 14.00

**CHAIRMAN:** General de Chastelain

**THOSE PRESENT:** British Government  
Irish Government

Alliance  
Labour  
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition  
Progressive Unionist Party  
Social Democratic and Labour Party  
Ulster Democratic Party  
Ulster Unionist Party

#### Item 1 - Minutes of Previous Meeting (25 February)

These were agreed as circulated.

#### Item 2 - Scheduling Arrangements for the Week Commencing 23 (including re-scheduling of Liaison Sub-Committee on Decommissioning) and for the Week Commencing 30 March

The Chairman outlined a number of proposals to maximise the use of available time for the remaining weeks of the negotiations. Following a discussion on these, the Committee agreed to operate the scheduling requirements on a flexible basis and in so doing recommended that the present hours of 10.30-17.30 (including lunch) should be maintained, but extended into an evening if this was deemed necessary on any future occasion. The Committee recommended that, at this stage, there was no requirement to schedule in a fourth day. Neither was this ruled out. The Committee also recommended that it would not now be appropriate to move away to a separate location in Northern Ireland to conclude the final stages of the

negotiations. It did, however take note of the PUP's suggestion that the British Government supply a list of alternative locations for the next meeting to allow Committee members to study the options. The Committee also noted that a requirement to move into bilaterals during any of the meetings was a decision for the relevant Chairmen.

The Committee noted the British Governments remarks that, should extended hours be introduced, full catering and accommodation facilities for those travelling long distances, could be made available.

The Committee agreed to recommend the following schedule of business for the week commencing 23 March and also agreed to leave open the following two weeks (30 March and 6 April) until the shape and format of the negotiations became clearer closer to those dates.

#### Monday 23 March

Strand One meeting (10.30-13.30; 14.30-17.30) possibly to include a presentation from the Secretary of State for Wales on the planned structures and operations of a Welsh Assembly.

#### Tuesday 24 March

Strand Two meeting (10.30-13.30; 14.30-17.30). Liaison Sub-committee on Confidence Building Measures at 11.00.

#### Wednesday 25 March

Liaison Sub-committee on Decommissioning at 12 noon.

The Committee noted proposals from the UUP and PUP that the next Strand Three Liaison meeting be scheduled for the week commencing 23 March and also took note of the Irish Governments suggestion that meetings scheduled for 10.30-17.30 be interspersed with a couple of short comfort breaks.

**Item 3- Any Other Business**

There was none.

**Item 4 - Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Business Committee would take place no later than 14.00 on 25 March.

**Independent Chairmen Notetakers  
11 March 1998**