

Office of the Independent Chairmen

Castle Buildings Stormont Belfast BT4 3SG Northern Ireland
Telephone 01232 522957 Facsimile 01232 768905

SUMMARY RECORD OF INAUGURAL STRAND TWO MEETING - TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 1997 (14.30)

CHAIRMEN:

Senator Mitchell
Mr Holkeri

THOSE PRESENT:

British Government
Irish Government
Alliance
Labour
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
Progressive Unionist Party
Sinn Féin
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Ulster Democratic Party
Ulster Unionist Party

1. The Chairman (Senator Mitchell) convened the meeting, and recalled that he had held discussions the previous week with each of the participants concerning the method of proceeding. As a result, there appeared to be agreement that a meeting in each Strand would be held for one full day next week, and the next meeting in Strand Two would therefore probably be held on Tuesday 14 October. The Chairman proposed therefore that each party, if it wished, should submit a paper on Item 1 of the outline agenda - Principles and Requirements - by 14.00 on Monday 13 October. These would then be circulated to all participants to form a basis for the discussions at the meeting on the following day.

2. The Chairman said that there had not been agreement on the appropriate size of delegations for the Strand meetings and the Liaison Subcommittee meetings. In accordance with Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure the Business Committee, scheduled to meet the following day, would decide this question. The Chairman also stated that he had suggested to the participants that Strand Two meetings would go through all the items on the agenda in the following weeks, allowing every party the chance to comment on all items. This would avoid the problem from earlier discussions where each item had to be

concluded and agreed before participants could move on to the next. There had been no objections to this proposal. The Chairman then invited the participants to make their opening statements, which it had been agreed would be limited to 15 minutes each.

3. The British Government said it very much welcomed the launch of Strand Two, alongside the launch of the other two strands. The fact that everyone had got to this point was a tribute to the will and determination of the parties and to the support and encouragement from their constituents. It had no doubt at all that the overwhelming majority wanted to see the talks take place and to succeed. But the fact that everyone had got to this point was also due, in no small measure, to the strength of the Chairman's own commitment to the process, matched by that of General de Chastelain and Prime Minister Holkeri. The British Government said the continued presence of all three was a vote of confidence in the process and a vote of confidence in Northern Ireland. It hoped the confidence the three Chairmen were showing in the participants would be repaid.

4. The British Government said it was no exaggeration to say that the talks could turn out to be a defining moment for Northern Ireland. It was in everyone's grasp to lay the foundation for a peaceful and harmonious future for the people of Northern Ireland and for their wider relationships with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The challenge was huge but the prize immeasurable. It hoped all would rise to the challenge; it was sure that was what the people wanted. It would require courage, good will and compromise - qualities that would make heavy demands on everyone - but the demands would be fully justified if the ultimate goal was reached.

5. The British Government said its purpose in the Strand was to address and seek to reach agreement on relationships and arrangements within the island of Ireland. The work that had to be undertaken in this Strand would be fundamental to the achievement of an agreement as a whole. There was no disguising the fact that in this Strand some of the most contentious issues facing everyone in the entire negotiations would be confronted. The question of the relationships within the island of Ireland, was of immense importance to both parts of the community in Northern Ireland and carried a very high political charge. It was an area where the different aspirations of those who supported Northern Ireland's

place within the Union and those who aspired to a united Ireland came hard up against each other. The down side of this, in terms of the negotiations, was that Strand Two dealt with issues which could be amongst the most difficult to resolve. The positive side was that if proposals could be produced which carried wide support amongst the parties this could be the key which unlocked the process as a whole.

6. With this in mind, the British Government said it looked forward to a vigorous and intensive discussion of the issues. Its role in the Strand, as in the negotiations as a whole, was to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of a comprehensive agreement based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions. This reflected its position in the Joint Declaration. The British Government said it was not committed to any single outcome and would support any conclusions, achieved by sufficient consensus, that emerged from the discussions and would be likely to command widespread support in the community. Part of its function in the Strand would be to ensure that whatever proposals were put forward fully accorded with the Government's international obligations.

7. The British Government said it was a feature of the three stranded process that whatever was proposed or agreed in one strand had the potential to affect what was advanced in another. One of the strengths of the three stranded process was that it permitted trade-offs both within and between strands and ensured that individual issues that were relevant to more than one relationship could be addressed in the appropriate ways. This was the case with constitutional issues. Proposals might be put forward in Strand Two which, intrinsically, would carry constitutional implications. Above and beyond that, the constitutional issues that were debated and examined in Strands One and Two would also have a bearing on the participants' attitudes to Strand Two. This being so a wide ranging debate on constitutional matters in this strand could be anticipated. There was provision for this in the outline agenda. If everyone was to achieve the overall outcome that was desired, then a crucial part of that would be an agreed view between the participants on the constitutional issues. These issues, which were of major importance to both unionists and nationalists, ran into Strand Three also. The British Government said it stood ready to discuss them with the parties in either Strand. Similarly the British Government said a wide-ranging discussion of human rights could be expected. This

matter was of particular interest in Strand One but was also relevant to wider relationships within the island of Ireland.

8. As with the other strands, the British Government said everyone would need to devise a workplan for this particular strand, drawing on the agenda dating from 15 October last year. There already existed of course, many links, contacts and exchanges at all levels between Northern Ireland and the Republic. These worked for the benefit and enrichment of people in both jurisdictions. The discussions in this strand, however, would give everyone the chance to consider in depth the character of the relationship in future.

9. The British Government said that among the issues it expected all would need to consider were the principles and requirements that should underpin the relationship, constitutional issues, and the nature, form and extent of the future relationship, including possible new institutional arrangements. The issue of possible institutional arrangements gave rise to questions about their role and composition, the method of establishment, the source of authority, lines of accountability, the extent of their responsibilities, methods of operation, sources of finance, and wider relationships affecting Northern Ireland, the Irish Government and Parliament, the British Government and Parliament, the European Union, and between the two Governments.

10. The British Government said that previous British and Irish Governments had, of course, set out their shared ideas on one possible model for the North/South relationship, as part of an overall agreement. This was to be found in "A New Framework for Agreement", published in 1995. It regarded that model as a useful basis for discussion which it commended. Of course this represented only one possible way of balancing the different interests and, if alternative proposals emerged in the negotiations, which would attract sufficient consensus and would command widespread support in the community, the British Government said it should be ready to support them.

11. In conclusion, the British Government said that as all began to focus on the issues in this strand it thought everyone might usefully remind each other of the commitments which all entered into when the rules of procedure were accepted. Together everyone had

undertaken to negotiate in good faith, seriously address all aspects of the agreed agenda, and make every effort to reach a comprehensive agreement. There were challenging goals; everyone had set their sights high. Having done so, it hoped everyone would do all they could to meet these challenging objectives in the months ahead. It was in the interests, of each and everyone one of the participants, that this should occur. All the participants, and all the people represented stood only to gain.

12. The Irish Government said its presence here today for the opening of substantive negotiations in the three Strands represented the fruit of many months of assiduous effort on the part of all gathered around the table. This was an event of landmark significance in the collective pursuit of a lasting and comprehensive settlement. The Irish Government said it wished to offer the Chairman, and his colleagues its profound thanks for all the skill and patience they had shown. The Irish Government said it had arrived here after a difficult and at times tortuous negotiation over almost a year and a half. It said it would like to congratulate all of the parties represented for the steadiness and commitment they had shown in engaging the process.

13. The Irish Government said many of the parties had shown the courage to move away from the fixed positions to which they had clung for so long in order to take part in the talks. In this they were representing both the best interests and the expressed wishes of the people who elected them. All too often in the past the lack of such leadership and willingness to take risks for peace had defeated efforts to reach a political settlement. The Irish Government said all democratic parties belonged here, and it was for that reason especially regrettable that two of the parties, the Democratic Unionist Party and the United Kingdom Unionist Party, had chosen for the moment not to take part in the work. It asked that both parties consider carefully how best the interests of their electors could be represented, and to join everyone here. Their voices should be heard, and the work would be the stronger for it.

14. The Irish Government said there were, unfortunately, small groups in both communities, but with no mandate from either, who even now had not yet accepted the futility of violence, and who agreed to provoke the collapse of the talks by playing on the

fears of the parties participating. It said it must not let these groups deflect us from our purpose, for the sake of the vast majority of the population represented by the democratic parties present. Nor must anyone allow themselves to lose sight of the urgency of finding a solution to the difficulties that had so long and so destructively divided the two main traditions on this island, and especially in Northern Ireland. Too many generations had grown up in an environment of violence and political stalemate, and only the middle ages and elderly could now remember a time before the Troubles.

15. The Irish Government said that, nevertheless, the people of both communities had shown a fierce determination that the cease-fires should develop into a permanent peace, and that that violence must not start again. It was they who had urged their political representatives to come and find an agreement. The Irish Government said that with the increased hope of the people had come a greater risk should everyone fail. Much political capital and much hope on both sides had been invested in the talks beginning in earnest today. If the process failed, the loss of both would not easily be recouped. The Irish Government said some had been here, or close to here, before. The three stranded negotiations in 1991-92, while they were ultimately unable to reach agreement in the time available, did demonstrate that both Governments and the political parties in Northern Ireland could engage in serious, constructive and ground-breaking discussions. Progress was made that could be built on for our work now.

16. The Irish Government said that everyone would do themselves and their electors a disservice if they minimised the very real difficulties that still lay ahead. At their heart was the fundamental divide between the nationalist and unionist perspectives on the status and future of Northern Ireland. For far too long each side had talked only to itself. Everyone must now talk to each other, listen to each other and seek to address each others' concerns. The Irish Government said that the talks had to be based on honest recognition of the differences. It represented a party and a Government, and indeed a nation, who had as an ideal the achievement of a united Ireland encompassing all the people from every political, cultural and religious background. It was a proud and valid aspiration to which it had been committed all its political life. But there was an overwhelming consensus that the

only means by which it should aim, or ever want, to bring this about was by peaceful persuasion of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

17. The Irish Government said that no party had to abandon its ideals to participate in the negotiations. There was no hidden traps. Both Governments, with the help of the parties and especially of the participants themselves had worked long and carefully to develop a format for the talks which threatened no one. Any agreement reached must be able to command majority support separately in each of the main traditions represented. It must be approved by Parliament and by the people in referenda, North and South. The Irish Government said its objective was to reach an agreement acceptable to the widest possible spectrum of opinion in Northern Ireland and Ireland as a whole. No one would be able to claim, on this occasion, that they did not have the opportunity to make their voice heard in the talks.

18. The Irish Government said it believed all were close enough today, based on the progress made in previous talks, on the values and principles expressed in the Joint Declaration and the possible outcome posited in the Joint Framework Document, and united by a common commitment to purely peaceful and democratic methods, to begin to discern the shape which a settlement would take, or at least the ground upon which it would be built. The Irish Government said that, through many false starts and stalled initiatives, everyone had come to a broad acceptance that a solution could not be imposed by the Governments, or constructed in the context of Northern Ireland alone. Everyone had reached a common understanding that the three stranded process was the way forward. Each strand represents a different aspect of the solution, but all three were closely interwoven and they had to be developed in parallel and in full if they were to constitute a sound agreement.

19. The Irish Government said that while experience had shown that a purely internal settlement could not be agreed and could not work, it readily accepted that devolved political structures in Northern Ireland were desirable, to allow for decisions to be taken as close as possible to the communities they affected and by Irish people of both traditions. This was in line with thinking in the European Union context, and indeed to some degree

with the present moves to devolve more power to regions within the United Kingdom. It would also provide a forum where the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland could begin to work together and co-operate in the day to day tasks of bettering the lives of their communities, which was the stuff of democratic politics everywhere.

20. The Irish Government said all of the parties present were engaged in the discussions in Strand One, which began that morning. The Irish Government said it would maintain an extremely close interest in the outcome of the work in that Strand. The negotiations in Strand Two, which were now opening would see it centrally involved. In its view, the creation of dynamic North/South institutions or bodies was an essential element to any solution, to express and cater for the many natural inter-connections on this island, be they the political and cultural links with the South felt and desired, by northern nationalists, or the potential for a productive intensification of common effort across a wide range of practical issues that could in principle be welcomed across the community.

21. The Irish Government said that the idea of such structures was not new. Until 1920 almost all administrative structures in Ireland were run by the devolved British administration in Dublin on an all-Ireland basis. The framers of the Government of Ireland Act clearly intended that this situation should continue as much as possible after, or despite, partition. The Irish Government said that while partition might have made some sense, on the political level, to one side in Northern Ireland, it had little economic logic, and overall at different times it had had serious negative effects on both parts of the island. The level of economic interaction across the border historically, for instance, had been very low. The Irish Government said that, in the past, each part had often developed their economies in a way which ignored potential markets and opportunities in their own back yard.

22. The Irish Government said that this artificial brake on development must be removed; everyone needed to remove the barriers to the operation of a single market on the island of Ireland. The creation of an all-Ireland marketplace could create significant new employment and add to the prosperity of the people, too many of whom had had to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Ireland had already proved itself, despite this retarding effect, to be a very profitable and attractive location for international investment. Both parts

of the island exhibited dynamic economic growth. Both had young, well educated populations and a largely unspoilt environment. Potential investors found attractive investment packages on the island. In the South, it had been particularly successful in attracting North American investment in recent years, and it had enjoyed consistent and sustained growth at high levels in economic output and jobs for many years. The issue should not, however, just be seen in institutional terms. It was the opportunity for all parts of the island to participate together in fostering the potential dynamism that was now evident. Some commentators were beginning to speak of the golden age of the Irish economy. It would be a pity if the people of Northern Ireland were not to have the option to share in that, as part of getting the best of both worlds.

23. The Irish Government said there had been different studies made of the potential economic effects of creating a true single market in Ireland. These had differed in their detailed conclusions, but not in their basic acceptance that both economies would benefit greatly from a single market. The Republic's own Confederation of Irish Industry had estimated that North/South trade could be trebled and thousands of new jobs created on the island. No one was suggesting that either part of Ireland forego its trade with Britain or elsewhere, but simply that the home market, which was determined principally by geography, and which was often the springboard for export success, be enlarged. The Irish Government said that business organisations, of course, had been increasingly aware for many years that it was in the interests of both parts of the island to work together. The CBI and IBEC established a Joint Business Council in 1991. There was increasing co-operation and contact between Chambers of Commerce, industrial and trade organisations, research and technological bodies and universities. At a macroeconomics level, the Northern Ireland Economic Council and the National Economic and Social Council co-operated closely. At local government level, local authorities in border areas had already formed links to consult and co-operate with each other.

24. The Irish Government said that both parts also worked together increasingly abroad, where Ireland was naturally perceived as an economic unit. Valuable co-ordination of effort was already underway between North and South in overseas markets. The geographic size and small domestic market, the peripheral location and compatible legal and regulatory

regimes, made it obviously sensible to work together in marketing the people, and the products abroad, to name but one dynamic area of possible co-operation on this island. Significant North/South institutions would represent first and foremost the recognition that there were many areas of activity which could most profitably be organised together on this small island, rather than separately in the two jurisdictions. This would deliver for the people practical advantages in both operational effectiveness and cost efficiency.

25. The Irish Government said that the concept of these bodies having executive powers should not give rise to any alarm; it simply recognised that such bodies should be able to carry out their own decisions. These bodies would represent a pooling of efforts and resources to the common good of all the people, in the manner in which it had become accustomed to work together in Europe in the last 25 years. The Irish Government said it should not be beyond everyone present to devise adequate safeguards for the democratic control and supervision of these bodies. The arguments in favour of reinforcing North/South co-operation had never been stronger. There was surging economic growth on both sides of the border. Unemployment was falling. New investors were seeking to maximise economies of scale by trading in an all-Ireland market. Most of this was market driven, but there had been a crucial input from the two governments and the European Union. It was vital that these positive developments were underpinned by effective governmental and public sector strategies in key areas.

26. The Irish Government said that a strong North/South Body invested with appropriate powers would provide the means for doing this. It would also, and most importantly, allow northern nationalists the chance to share along with unionists the sense that their aspirations and identity were reflected in the governance and administration of their own place. Also needed was an examination of how Ireland as a whole was best represented in the European Union, and the scope for it in co-operation with the British Government, to represent and support the concerns of Northern Ireland as a region of the EU. Full advantage also needed to be taken of policies designed to stimulate inter-regional and cross-border co-operation.

27. Later this evening, the Irish Government said that both Governments would meet to commence discussions in Strand Three. Both would be discussing in that Strand measures to enhance the co-operation of the two Governments, taking into account, in due course, the developing outlines of the settlement in the other two Strands. Both Governments had confirmed, as signatories of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that they would be prepared to consider a new and more broadly based Agreement which would take its place. The Irish Government said it did not see this as in any way moving away from the approach and achievements of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but as building on it and widening its scope to build in the input of elected representatives in Northern Ireland into the intergovernmental dialogue. It expected that both Governments would agree to consult the parties on their intentions as regards Strand Three at the next available opportunity.

28. The Irish Government said that everyone had a full programme of work in all three Strands. For its part, it would be elaborating its own ideas, and would be listening with great interest to the views of the other delegations. Everyone spoke from many different perspectives and backgrounds, but the Irish Government said it believed absolutely that all could arrive between them at a settlement which could be accepted by the people each represented. The Irish Government said it was unlikely that the final agreement would fully incorporate the ideal position of any of the participants. But all had come here in a common acceptance that democratic politics was the only way forward, and that compromises had to be made. It was convinced the process could succeed. The Irish Government said it wanted to assure everyone that it would play its part to the full in reaching the settlement all wanted.

29. In conclusion the Irish Government said it wished to pay tribute to its former Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Minister had played a fundamental part in getting the talks to where they were today. The Irish Government said it wished to thank him sincerely for all his work both in terms of the Northern Ireland political talks process, as a representative of the Government in other posts and for his work in north County Dublin. The Irish Government said it extended its deepest sympathy to him on the death of his brother.

30. Alliance said in its opening statement to Strand One, it represented its analysis of the problem with reference to four principles which it held to be fundamental to the understanding and the resolution of the problems of the first set of relationships - those within Northern Ireland. The other Northern Ireland parties, and the British Government representatives were familiar with that paper and it would not reiterate all the arguments set forward in it, since it was available. Strand Two was of course about relationships between North and South, but it was greatly influenced by how the party viewed the matters addressed in Strand One, and so, in particular for the Irish Government to whom these comments were largely addressed, Alliance said it would briefly summarise those four fundamental principles:

The first was, that the people of Northern Ireland, despite their obvious divisions, formed a historic and coherent community, and had the right to determine their own future, and participate directly in their own governance. A regional government was necessary to provide a common focus of loyalty, and an opportunity to share in self-government.

Secondly, that the community, whatever its historical coherence, was characterised by differences, and the primary objective must be the protection and the valuing of minorities.

Thirdly, that as in every community, stability and prosperity required the achievement and maintenance of law and order, the recent history ensured that in Northern Ireland all must be especially attentive to the requirement that at every level those who took positions of responsibility and represented all strands in the community, must have, and must exercise, confidence in the law and in those who administered it.

And finally, that there was a contribution to be made, and a price to be paid for peace in the community, not only by those who lived in Northern Ireland, but also by those who lived in the rest of the United Kingdom, and in the Republic of Ireland.

31. Alliance said that as everyone entered Strand Two the second set of relationships - those between Northern Ireland and the rest of the island were to be addressed. The party said that in this introductory statement it should like to address underlying realities, identity, allegiance, and constitutional matters. To speak of underlying realities was immediately to imply that what appeared on the surface might indeed be superficial, and it was certainly the party's conviction that much of what passed for accepted knowledge, was simply illusion. Alliance continued saying that in the early 1920's there were considerable illusions about the strength and nature of the attitudes of the pro-union people of the North. There was a notion that if the British Government was to stand aside northerners and southerners would soon be reconciled. The southern delegates at Downing Street in 1921 seemed readily to agree that Ulster should be given a free choice, but found it more difficult to answer Lloyd George's question as to what would happen if the northerners declined to co-operate. This was a position which was not hard to find in some circles to this day. Perhaps it was the strength of the assumption that the resistance of non-nationalists was a passing notion of no great depth or strength, that explained why it was such a minor issue in the bitter debates in the Dail that followed the signing of the Treaty. Alliance said it would cite as evidence of this, estimations that of the 338 printed pages which the report of the debate filled, only nine were devoted to partition, and two-thirds of these contributed by deputies from Monaghan.

32. The party said that this illusion still persisted was suggested to it by the expectations amongst the authors of the Anglo-Irish Agreement what whilst there might be passing annoyance and protest, it would be only a matter of time until there was some form of acceptance. Even 12 years later this was not the case. It was Alliance's hope that the people at the table would not imagine that the problem in Ireland was the border. It believed that it was Professor J C Beckett who first said "The real partition is not on the map, but in the minds of men". It was in the hearts and minds and relationships of the people that one had to look for the underlying realities.

33. Alliance stated that whether or not the border was seen to be the origin of the problem, it was nevertheless the case that there might be those who would subscribe to the notion of the nation-state. In the Irish context this idea was often further elaborated to

propose that an Irish nation-state should be contiguous with our particular physical geography. That is to say that there was an Irish Nation, which should identify with an Irish State, whose boundary should conform with the island of Ireland. It was this idea which was espoused in the 1937 constitution. Alliance said there was a profound romantic appeal to the proposition of an independent island nation state, and indeed from a psychological point of view, the simple attractive proposition of being at one with oneself on an island surrounded by water, had the deepest of reassuring material resonance's. It took everyone back to a time before they could remember, and might point to why the feminine, and especially the maternal element had played such a central role in Irish religious, political, cultural, mythological, and social life.

34. Alliance said it had taken a woman, the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, to point out to everyone in her inspiring inaugural speech, that the sense of identity which was Irishness was not particularly a matter of statehood. "The State", she said, "is not the only model of community with which Irish people can and do identify". Her expression of freedom, which the party said broke the link between mere state allegiance and a sense of Irishness, meant that her election could be a matter of joy in East Belfast as well as in Ballina. The truth was that it was not possible to define what a nation was, except on the crudest and most primitive of racist theories. Nationhood was for many people a precious and a deeply meaningful thing, but it was essentially a matter of the heart, and as such was not exclusivist. It could not be defined as a state could, and it was corrupted, and sometimes positively dangerous, when it was mixed with the politics of statehood.

35. Alliance said most states were not in any real sense national entities. Belgium wasn't, Switzerland wasn't. The United Kingdom wasn't. And while the Basques, and the Bretons shared common citizenship and statehood with other Spaniards and Frenchmen, they certainly did not regard themselves as being part of a Spanish nation or a French nation. As others too were trying to resolve deep bloody historic divisions, Alliance said everyone would do well to reflect on what had happened when that most rugged and persistent nation, the Jews, had sought to identify Jewish nationhood with a particular piece of ground, the state of Israel. To identify Irishness with allegiance to a particular state was to confuse, to alienate and to divide Irish men and women. But, "some of you will say",

when the former President spoke of the Irish diaspora, she was speaking of something different. The Irish émigrés in North America, Australia, and even those in England, had chosen to leave home. They held allegiance to their own state. They were Americans (albeit Irish-Americans), Australians, and some were even British, but to live on the island of Ireland was something quite different. Whatever about nationhood or identity, there was the question of statehood. It was surely clear that the boundary of the state should conform to the natural frontier provided by the sea.

36. Alliance said this was a misunderstanding of the history and social geography of Ireland. Communities were formed through communication between people. Through ties of kinship (which were not chosen but into which all were born) people developed a sense of identity and often of nationhood. Through the politics of social and economic intercourse, and the need for mutual protection (which were chosen and which might change) people developed states and the benefits of citizenship. This was all on the basis of communication. As the party had pointed out in its introduction to Strand One, in the past the water, if it was not too wide, was not necessarily a frontier. On the contrary it was a channel of communication. It was easier and a good deal less dangerous to travel back and forth between the north-east of Ireland and the south-west of Scotland than to venture inland and across country to Galway or to Cork. That was why not only the Presbyterians of Antrim and Down, but also many of the Catholics of the Glens of Antrim, were originally Scots, some of them of very ancient pre-reformation descent. The community in the north-east of the island, whose actual extent had varied considerably over the centuries, had always had a regional distinctiveness, and powerful relationships with Scotland.

37. The party said there were some whose attachment to the notion of an island nation state, was such that they would happily sacrifice not only relationships but lives to bring it about. Others simply said in a wistful, and sad way, "What have we done wrong that Northerners do not want to be part of a unitary state". Perhaps they were asking the wrong question. When a young man asked himself, "Why does she not love me?" he would often tell himself he was not handsome enough, not clever enough, not wealthy enough, or perhaps not of the same social class, or religion. In general there were not the issues.

She did not love him, because she did not love him. It was something rational. It was a matter of the heart. The real question for the young man was "Why are you so besotted with her, that despite the fact that she has eyes only for another, you make a nuisance of yourself about her?" But the question was important. Southern nationalists should ask themselves why it was that they were so determined to take to themselves people, who whilst happy to live beside them, and indeed be friends, did not want to sign a marriage contract. Indeed the more they pressed their attentions, the more their suit was likely to cause offence, and there was no more clear aspect of this than the threatened shot-gun marriage pre-figured in Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. What was this desire that it couldn't be satisfied with "the hand of friendship, and no strings attached?" as quoted by former President Mary Robinson.

38. Alliance said it was hard for everyone to accept the realities of life, especially in matters of the heart, but it was now a fact of history that this was the position. The majority of the people of the north-east of the island did have a desire for good neighbourly relations, but if these talks, or the evolution of European integration, was seen as some kind of back door to a united Ireland, then dreams were being dreamt which could make a real relationship more difficult. Alliance said if these were some of the underlying realities, the varying identities, the divergent allegiances, and the constitutional problems, what were the common interests and themes that brought people together? It must not be forgotten that there were already many social and cultural realms where co-operation throughout the island was considerable. The main Christian denominations, many sporting, professional and trade organisations, and artistic and cultural bodies had always operated, throughout the island. There was an extensive network of trusting and solid co-operation on which to build the social relationship between North and South. There was also a wealth of opportunity for everyone to learn more from each other in the economic field, and out of that to enjoy unprecedented growth and development. For years it was known that in agriculture, tourism, energy, transport, the environment and economic development, the opportunities for co-operation were very considerable, and the price that both North and South had paid for its relative absence had been similarly considerable. Alliance said, however, that partition had had no economic logic, nor had Irish independence and it was the twenty-six counties which had left a single market rather than Northern Ireland. The

party said that working together, however, was not without its difficulties, but it was clear our small island, wholly inside the European Community, had to address these issues if it was not to suffer quite unforgivably in the future.

39. Alliance said that in order to achieve such developments, and to help build the relationships which would ensure the northern nationalists need not feel that they were cut off from their fellows in the South, it would be necessary for institutional recognition of the North-South relationship. The party said it looked forward to an early opportunity to make proposals, and explore with colleagues around the table, the opportunities for such practical, accountable, mutually respectful institutions of government as might be part of the settlement to which all had committed themselves to work.

40. Labour said it believed that there would be no workable solution that excluded the recognition of differing identities within Northern Ireland. Much as some or many would engage in wishful thinking about ignoring the 'Irish ' dimension the fact was that some 40% of the population felt Irish, to varying degrees, and wanted that dimension to their culture recognised in tangible institutional form. Those people were not saying to the unionists that they should be less British but they were demanding that their status be given equal recognition. The party said that might appear a harsh opening comment but it had to be accepted as a basic truth by unionists and they must stop playing mind games that any sizeable portion of the Catholic population would, at present, vote for the union. However, for unionists to accept that trust was not to be 'giving into republican violence' or 'surrendering' to use the emotive term. Rather it was to sit down and accept the realities and come up with workable solutions that the party believed would meet the realistic aspirations of the vast majority of people, not just in Northern Ireland but in the Republic and Great Britain.

41. Labour said if there was evidence, that given the chance tomorrow, that most Catholics would vote for a united Ireland then there was equally evidence that, given an honourable settlement, most Catholics would accept Northern Ireland. Therein lay the comfort and protection that should assure unionists and ensure their cultural identity. From that basis unionists should enter Strand Two confidently determined to reach solutions that

benefited their constituents. Labour continued saying republicans had every right to state their aspirations which, when shorn of the gun, were just as legitimate as those of the unionists. It was the party's opinion that they should not, however, enter the talks on the single premise that a united Ireland was achievable or perhaps, in the context of seeking lasting peace on this island, even desirable. They had to search for a settlement that gave to their constituents lasting peace, prosperity and inclusion because that was what the people truly wanted. Labour said it believed that the driving force behind their support over the last thirty years had not been the pursuit of a united Ireland but a search for inclusion, acceptance, and equality.

42. Labour addressing everyone, said it had to make clear that majority rule either within Northern Ireland or within an all Ireland context was irrelevant to the future of the people of this island. While the 'wishes of majority' presently offered comfort to unionists it also, at some later date, presented them with problems. Equally the 'right of the people of Ireland to decide their own future' gave solace to republicans but offered no solution whatsoever to the future peaceful governance of this island. What all had to agree was that majoritarianism offered no solutions and that the only hope was to construct solutions that made everyone winners. Labour said it firmly believed that all Ireland co-operation not only recognised different cultural identities but also provided a wonderful opportunity to develop social interaction and institutions that would be of enormous benefit to the people culturally, economically and socially.

43. The party said that having an irrational land border distorted any socio-economic infrastructure but at least in Europe they were working to overcome these drawbacks. Only here, in Ireland, had everyone allowed ancient disputes to hinder development. If there ever was a case of biting off your nose to spite your face then this was it. Labour said it believed that the people would benefit from co-operation in real and meaningful ways in areas such as health, education, public utilities, tourism and general infrastructure. However, it cautioned that the people must be involved in real and meaningful senses. This concept reached far beyond simply two legislatures or governments arranging matters but went down into the communities involved. The people of Monaghan, Cavan, Tyrone or Armagh did not want to be simply ruled, at a distance, by legislatures in Belfast or Dublin.

Rather they wanted real and meaningful involvement in the institutions that governed vital services in their lives.

44. Labour expressed regret over the recent decision of Minister McDaid concerning the cross border tourist campaign. Such insensitivity beggared belief. However, perhaps it was a blessing in disguise in that it highlighted a real concern in Northern Ireland; that the Dublin Government would treat Northern Ireland like an errant child and operate the old maxim 'do as I say not as I do'. The party said the people of Northern Ireland had to have cast iron assurances from Dublin that co-operation meant really that and that there was a willingness to be even handed in the implementation of any matters that were devolved to cross border bodies. Firmly but assuredly Labour said it asserted that co-operation was not a one way street but, at this stage, it was very concerned about the actual operational mode of the Dublin Government on the ground. Labour said it was firmly in support of cross border institutions where there were demonstrable benefits to the entire people of this island.

45. The NIWC expressed sympathy to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs on the death of his brother. The NIWC said it welcomed the opening of Strand Two and wished to express its commitment to the development of substantive negotiations about our shared future on these islands. While the party accepted that Strand Two would not be an easy process for any of the participants it believed that Northern Ireland deserved the leap of imagination that was required to turn political obstacles on North/South relations into political challenges. If everyone allowed every obstacle to become a blockage to progress this would frustrate not the participants but more importantly the peoples of Northern Ireland and beyond.

46. In entering into Strand Two the NIWC said everyone must move away - as far as was possible from a conflict mode which emphasised winners and losers; the 'them' and 'us'. Instead - as unionists and nationalists, loyalists and republicans and others - everyone must set their minds to a mode which stressed the importance of jointly designing an outcome, or a range of possible outcomes, for the difficulties that faced everyone. The NIWC said everyone had to seek to adopt lateral thinking so that one could look beyond

the limited range of time worn options, perceptions and positions, and try to create new possibilities.

47. The party said argument from pre-determined positions could do this only to a very limited extent. Everyone needed to identify the issues and problems and discuss them with a view to finding new solutions. It was the party's experience that the practice to date when North/South relations had been raised was they that had all too often been divisive and narrowly defensive. The first challenge should be to create a sense of unity around the common project; and to formulate a talks process that would underpin this sense of shared challenge. clearly the eventual aim of such a common project was to identify and flesh out the parameters of an agreed settlement - or at the very least a range of feasible options.

48. The NIWC said it was of course easier to pose questions than to produce answers but it did so now so as to focus on some of the key issues facing Strand Two. How could we seek to create new relationships and arrangements that could transcend current borders and boundaries? How could this small piece of land have relationships and arrangements that would recognise and give expression to Irish and British identities and have sufficient acceptance to be stable, but also be dynamic enough to allow for development and change? Did we need to look at relations with a more autonomous Scotland and Wales and ask what lessons could be learnt from democratic institutions being developed there? How was our shared European citizenship to be played out? How could the European Union, as a model, offer security rather than a threat and how indeed could we offer a new model of co-operation to Europe? How could we build on this kind of European Union in acknowledging our interdependency on these islands? How could we secure harmonisation of economic and social policy to enhance the quality of life on an island whose recent history had shown our dependence on each other. An unending, unrelenting conflict not only destroyed tourism but the economic base on both parts of Ireland. Could we accept the need to build strong structures to develop a competitive island economy capable of overcoming its periferality in the European Union?

49. The NIWC continued and asked whether everyone could agree common sense criteria such as: common interest; mutual advantage; mutual benefit? Could everyone craft

genuinely co-operative North/South structures and arrangements committed to proactive and constructive engagement? The party said that when South Africans sat down to design their new constitution, their first commitment was not just to achieving equality between people of all races but also men and women, How could everyone ensure that when this conflict was over, the role which women had played across and within their communities would not be forgotten? They needed to be written into and not out of the scripts which everyone now had the opportunity to design. The party said everyone must ensure that this happened by committing themselves to equal access for women as well as men to any new structures on this island.

50. The NIWC said it believed that for too long thinking had been bound and limited by fears and apprehension, rather than stretching out for new visions and opportunities. It accepted that there were genuine fears in relation to how much or how little was built into Strand Two. The real challenge facing everyone was to put the various fears and hopes on the table in order to forge an agreement which could win the greatest possible consent across all communities. Everyone had to work to win consent from each other at the table, building an eventual consensus which could then win the consent of as many of the people as possible.

51. The party said it was its belief that while all parties should be prepared to compromise and that any minority should accept the principle of consent, the onus was on any majority to show leadership and to move the politics of Northern Ireland towards a politics of partnership both internally and externally. The party said it should not be an impossibility for everyone to have the confidence to create a society which addressed and accommodated its internal differences as well as reaching out to its neighbours. It believed the people of Northern Ireland were giving a clear message that they wished to see the kind of negotiated settlement that could remove any perception of the need, by any group, to resort ever again to violence.

52. The NIWC said the prize for successful negotiations would be to effectively break the vicious cycle that held the danger of condemning everyone's children to the conflict and bitterness that had already been experienced. The party said it held with the lines of Evan

Boland on the untimely death of a child in the Troubles and stated that everyone must "Find for your sake, whose life our idle talk has lost, a new language. Child of our times, our times have robbed your cradle. Sleep in a world your final sleep has woken." The party said this tribute was written in 1874 - twenty three years later, everyone still needed to work for that new world. But there was now the opportunity to create it. Everyone also needed to create that new language which Evan Boland wrote about. The current language which talked about the enemy, the battle, eyeballing, confronting, smashing, destroying, damaged the process.

53. The NIWC asked how could it be sought from these negotiations to win the consent across all our communities for a balanced accommodation incorporating Northern Ireland, North/South and East/West arrangements when parties to the negotiations were regularly demonised; it was unacceptable even if it was done for the purpose of keeping ones own side on board. The party asked how could people believe that any new arrangements would deliver respect for all identities and aspirations when this respect couldn't be implemented in practice during the shaping of the settlement. How could the people be prepared for a referendum on a balanced accommodation if everyone could not begin now to learn a new language. The language of a macho, chauvinistic style of politics created an unacceptable culture - it had to be changed.

54. The NIWC said that Geoff Mulgan argued that in the years to come political leaders would be distinguished by their approach to national history and identity. At one end would be those who see identity as malleable and necessarily changing to cope with shifting circumstances. These politicians would have a radical and critical attitude towards history as opposed to a closed sense of national history and identity. To be open to future change meant to constantly find within history new lessons and qualities which could be applied to the future. At the other extreme were politicians who regarded history and identity as closed and fixed. As a result they believed the point of politics was to live out a society's sense of historic destiny. The NIWC said that as the millennium approached, let everyone adopt the kind of politics appropriate to these modern times and develop the rational, radical political accommodation that Northern Ireland so badly needed.

55. The PUP said that, during the morning Strand One discussion, it had stated that the success of the whole process was about developing effective relationships. The main basis from which these could be developed was to ensure that everyone dealt with the realities of the situation. The party said it had listened to many comments over a long period of time on the matter of Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution. The PUP said it didn't matter what the contents of Article 1 or 10 might be in that Constitution. The main focus for it was these two Articles yet the Irish Government was unable to sanction their removal in any case. This was the reality of the situation, yet Articles 2 and 3 caused difficulty with the unionist relationship with the Republic of Ireland.

56. The PUP said everyone had to look to a situation where antagonism in such relationships could be decreased, though the party recognised that it could take a great deal of will, on the part of everyone, to achieve this. The party said, however, that everyone needed to appreciate the potential for co-operation across the relationships in areas of mutual benefit. The party said it had listened carefully to Alliance's earlier remarks regarding the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic which it believed had been extremely accurately depicted. The PUP said the people of the Republic had to realise that they shouldn't be gilding the lily with unionists in the north, nor always exclusively identifying themselves with catholic/nationalist causes in Northern Ireland. The party said it was foolish to believe that the situation of the past in Northern Ireland (where in all the years of the Stormont parliament only one piece of legislation proposed by nationalists had made the statute book) still existed. The PUP said that both Governments had to remember, in their Strand Three discussions later, that Northern Ireland was changing dramatically and would continue to do so. The important reality for everyone to bear in mind was that there was now a situation where some light and hope was visible at the end of the tunnel. Where there was a will, there was a way, but the PUP said it was important for everyone to look at the actual practicalities for progress and in so doing this might provide a reasonable chance of eventual success.

57. Sinn Féin said it endorsed the earlier remarks of the Minister for Justice in relation to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs and expressed sympathy on the death of the latter's brother. Continuing, Sinn Féin said it was reminded, entering the Strand Two discussions,

of Bobby Sands writing on the first day of his hunger strike. "I am standing on the threshold of another trembling world". Sinn Féin said it too stood today on a threshold. A new century, a new millennium beckoned, holding out the hope of a new beginning for the people of Ireland and of these islands. What was needed was the courage and the vision to work together, in particular within the process, to reach a democratic peace settlement acceptable to all the people of the island. Sinn Féin added that it had listened to the PUP saying that the situation in Northern Ireland had changed dramatically. The party said it agreed with the PUP's remarks and the change had been brought about because people had not been prepared to put up with the previous situation any longer.

58. Sinn Féin said that if participants around the table could meet these challenges then today would mark the commencement of the transition from conflict and division to peace and democracy. This placed an onerous responsibility upon everyone. The party said everyone would face difficulties but these had to be overcome. The Irish Government, especially, had an historic responsibility to pro-actively promote Irish national interests in an inclusive but assertive way.

59. Sinn Féin said it was absolutely committed to democratic and peaceful methods of resolving problems. It said it was determined to win an equitable and lasting agreement which could accommodate diversity and provide for national reconciliation. In terms of building a new democracy the party said the task before everyone was a difficult one: to remove the causes of centuries of conflict. Its starting point must be the recognition, particularly by the British Government, that British policy in Ireland had manifestly failed. Partition had failed. The decades of unionist rule in the North had failed. Those days had gone forever. There was no going back to the failed policies and structures of the past, to the domination of a one-party unionist state supported by the British Government. Sinn Féin said that today everyone, collectively, closed the door on that part of our history. Everyone was opening a new door.

60. Sinn Féin said it was reminded of President Nelson Mandela's remarks of what this required when he had said, "What challenges us, is to ensure that none should enjoy lesser rights; and none tormented because they are born different, hold contrary political views or

pray to God in a different manner". The party said it was tasked with looking to the future and, in plotting a course for that future, it had to bring in change on constitutional and political matters, demilitarise the situation and establish democratic rights for all of the people. Sinn Féin said if these were not the reasons why everyone was present, then they were here on a false premise.

61. Sinn Féin said it entered the negotiations as an Irish republican party seeking to promote the broad nationalist objective of an end to British rule in Ireland. It was its firm view that this Strand, which dealt with north/south relations, was a critical area of negotiation because the resolution of the conflict would only be found in an all-Ireland context. British policy at present upheld the union. It enforced the partition of Ireland. Democratic opinion in Ireland and in Britain had to seek to change this policy to one of ending the union.

62. Sinn Féin said the issue of sovereignty, the claim of the British Government to sovereignty in a part of Ireland, was a key matter which it would raise in the negotiations. Its objective was to achieve, through dialogue, an agreed Ireland. The political and historical evidence showed that political independence, a united Ireland, offered the best guarantee of equality and the most durable basis for peace and stability. An internal six county arrangement could not work.

63. The party said there were many other issues which fuelled the conflict. For example there needed to be equality of treatment in terms of employment, economic development and the Irish language and culture, as well as on the difficult issue of cultural symbols, of flags and emblems. In other words there needed to be equality in all sectors of society - in social, economic, cultural, education, justice, democratic rights and national rights issues.

64. The party said these issues did not require negotiation. Unionists should take note of this. They were issues of basic civil and human rights. It said the British Government should act on these issues immediately by outlining a programmatic approach which delivered real change, which made equality a reality and which built confidence in the wider peace process. The immediate responsibility for equality rested with the London

Government and there should be no artificial distinctions, no arbitrary barriers placed in the way of these rights.

65. Sinn Féin continued saying that the Irish Government and Irish nationalists, however, also had a responsibility, a responsibility to ensure that the concerns and fears of the unionist population were addressed and resolved through negotiation. A process of national reconciliation must secure the political, religious and democratic rights of the northern unionist population. That was not only the democratic norm but a practical necessity if everyone was to advance the cause of peace in Ireland.

66. Sinn Féin said it was self-evident that peace required the demilitarisation of society. The political climate in which the talks were occurring could be significantly improved if the British Government acted positively and speedily to demilitarise the situation. It believed repressive legislation should end. The party lived in a permanent police state and a permanent state of emergency existed in Northern Ireland. The deployment of military and paramilitary forces by the British Government should end. The ongoing construction programme of new fortifications should end. The issue of political prisoners had to be fully resolved. There had to be urgent movement on the release of all political prisoners.

67. Sinn Féin said it welcomed the contribution of the Chairman and his colleagues to the negotiating process. The party said it had long argued for an international dimension to the search for peace in Ireland. The international dimension was one which could play a crucial part in maintaining the momentum and dynamic through the negotiations. There was a huge gap of distrust between nationalists and unionists. It had to be bridged. Everyone needed to secure an accommodation, based on equality. In setting out the republican position, Sinn Féin said it also wanted to stress its willingness to listen to other positions and to see and to uphold the dignity of all sections of the people. Building peace was a collective responsibility. Sinn Féin said the British Government also had a crucial and constructive role to play in persuading unionists to reach a democratic agreement on the issue of Irish national reunification with the rest of the people of the island and to encourage, facilitate and enable such agreement.

68. Sinn Féin said it was committed to a transformation of Irish society. It knew that peace was not simply the absence of violence. Its vision saw beyond the present conflict and beyond the present phase of history. That vision embraced democracy. It was economic, as well as political. The party was for the redistribution of wealth, for the well-being of the aged, for the advancement of youth, for the liberation of women and for the protection of our children. The party's vision was for a free Ireland and for a free people. It was for an end to war.

69. The party said it foresaw the relationship between Britain and Ireland resting upon mutual independence. It was this vision which sustained its efforts to reach agreement and a new accommodation between all the people. There was nothing complicated or unreasonable about these goals or their achievement. But they would not be achieved without leadership and it was everyone's collective task to provide that leadership.

70. Sinn Féin said the objective, whatever the goals, had to be to bring about qualitative change. Substantial change. Effective change. Everyone's task in the time ahead was to manage that change and to ensure that it was peaceful and constructive. It was time everyone opened their own chapter in the history of Ireland and wrote a chapter of which all could be proud.

71. The SDLP expressed its sympathy to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs on the death of his brother and said it was also deeply shocked by the resignation decision just announced. It was somewhat of a cruel irony that the decision came on the same day as the launch of the Three Stranded process to which the Minister had been so committed. The SDLP said it wished Mr Burke well and thanked him for his efforts both within the process and throughout the many previous years of public office in the Republic.

72. The SDLP said it had this morning, in Strand One, outlined the basic principles which were at the root of agreement in this process. The strand which was being launched this afternoon was, arguably, the most important in terms of redefining relationships between the two main political traditions on the island whose identities and allegiances transcended the confines of Northern Ireland. The issues to be addressed in this strand

went to the heart of the problems, and posed the greatest challenge to the outcome of these negotiations.

73. The SDLP said the New Ireland Forum led the way in redefining the basis relationships. The Forum did so by marking the formal end to an exclusively territorial perspective on the partition of Ireland. Henceforward, partition was to be regarded primarily as the product of dismembered relationships in Ireland and not exclusively the result of British self interest. While the Forum parties stressed that Irish unity would continue to be the objective of the nationalist tradition, the agreement of unionists was recognised as a necessary factor in healing relationships. The party said the immediate aim now was a constitutional and political settlement embracing both parts of Ireland and giving due recognition to unionist and nationalist rights and aspirations. Underpinning such a settlement would be a satisfactory accommodation of relationships between the communities on both parts of the island.

74. The SDLP said that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was an essential step towards such a settlement. In that agreement that Irish and British Governments committed themselves to recognise, reconcile and acknowledge "the rights of the two major traditions that exist in Ireland, represented on the one hand by those who wish for no change in the present status of Northern Ireland and on the other hand by those who aspire to a sovereign united Ireland achieved by peaceful means and through agreement". The latter represented the party's perspective as it headed into the talks. Of the three commitments, the party said reconciling both set of rights posed the greatest challenge. Recognising and acknowledging two sets of rights as legitimate did not automatically reconcile them, at least not in the political and constitutional sense.

75. The SDLP said recognition and acknowledgement could be afforded in a variety of ways, none of which might directly impinge on the major problem of how to reconcile two mutually exclusive aspirations, one of which was also reality, ie the unionist aspiration to maintain Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom and the nationalist aspiration to a united Ireland. In the Anglo-Irish Agreement this was addressed in Article 1, by affirming the principle of consent as the basis for change in the status of Northern Ireland and by

recognising both the north of Ireland's present status alongside the potential for it to become part of a united Ireland. The party said while the Agreement did not explicitly use the language of self determination, it did so implicitly and in a manner which required the British Government to acknowledge, for the first time in an international agreement, the legitimacy of the aspiration for a united Ireland. Indeed, while the concept of self-determination was being implicitly accepted, its application was being defined in terms more suited to the Irish context, and so could more accurately be described as "co-determination". Irish unity was now deemed to require assent from the communities in the North as well as assent from the people in the South, a position never before so formally endorsed by both governments.

76. The party continued, saying that in the 1993 Joint Declaration the then Taoiseach and then British Prime Minister repeated their commitments. Significantly they also went beyond the actual terms of the Agreement by endorsing the need for an all Ireland framework to a solution by pledging themselves "to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island and between these islands". This common pledge was followed by a commitment on the part of the British Prime Minister, first, "to uphold the democratic wish of the greater number of people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland (but also) to work together with the Irish Government to achieve such an agreement, which will embrace the totality of relationships. The role of the British Government will be to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of such agreement. They accept that such an agreement may, as of right, take the form of a united Ireland achieved by peaceful means".

77. The SDLP said, placed alongside the statement that the British Government had "no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland", it was difficult to interpret this commitment other than as the door being clearly opened to a united Ireland. The invitation to go through that door was left to those convinced that it was in the best interests of all of the people to do so. Meantime, the British Government committed itself to encouraging, facilitating and enabling agreement between the people of Ireland and if, in seeking

agreement, the Irish people decided to unite, it was clear from the declaration that this wish would be accepted.

78. The SDLP said that for its part, the Irish Government reiterated its acceptance, in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, of the principle of consent to constitutional change by stating that “it would be wrong to impose a united Ireland, in the absence of freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland (and) that the democratic right of self determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland”. The party said this was a pledge given without coercion and under no pressure by the government of the Irish Republic.

79. The party said that, within the context of these commitments and assurances, the Joint Framework Document argued that in addressing North - South and all-island relationships, a settlement would have to ensure that political structures were put in place which would provide the fulcrum and dynamic for a new partnership. The SDLP said it saw such institutions with decision making powers as being an integral part of any new settlement because such a partnership was essential to the expression of the nationalist community’s allegiance. Such institutions would be characterised by:

a capacity to represent both the nationalist and unionist identities in a manner which would attract support and allegiance throughout the island;

a capacity to address all matters of mutual concern and interest to the people of the whole island;

a capacity to promote and achieve harmonious action between institutions and agencies throughout the island;

a capacity to promote co-operation and co-ordination in social and economic developments as they affect the whole of the island;

a capacity to provide for the administration of services on mutually agreed basis;

a capacity to represent common Irish interests to the European Community and other international agencies as appropriate, and;

a capacity to breakdown barriers of distrust which have led to past divisions and to promote agreement accepting both diversity within Ireland and the unique relationships between the peoples of Ireland and Britain.

80. The party said that, within such political arrangements, due cognisance had to be taken of the opportunities and prospects for the development of economic, social and cultural relationships which existed throughout the whole island. As the New Ireland Forum's report on the economic consequences of partition had clearly pointed out, many sectors of the island's economy, as well as many geographical areas, especially those along both sides of the border, had been seriously inhibited in their development.

81. The SDLP said that in the more favourable climate which had been emerging in recent years and from which both parts of the island were, in differing degrees, benefiting, the need to develop a coherent and co-ordinated all-island approach to economic development was becoming more and more apparent. It was the party's view that this approach should be based on a North/South partnership, formally structured, which encompassed the whole range of socio-economic and business relationships on the island. The party said it further believed that the success of the island economy might be entirely complementary to the wider economic prospects of Ireland and Britain within the European Union. Planning the approach had therefore to take account of this wider context and be undertaken in conjunction with its appropriate agencies.

82. In the course of the negotiations the SDLP said it would be urging that the necessary conditions and circumstances which would produce dynamic and successful economic growth throughout the whole of Ireland be identified and the means whereby those conditions and circumstances could be sustained agreed. At the close of negotiations, settlement proposals would have to be put to the people of Ireland, North and

South, in accordance with commitments already made by both governments. In this way nothing could be imposed which would infringe the basic rights of either community. Viewed positively, such a mechanism would amount to a joint expression of the principle of consent and the right to self-determination. A successful outcome would have to obtain endorsement from both traditions.

83. The SDLP said that by jointly expressing the principle of consent and the right to self-determination, the dual referendum would be the most fundamental embodiment of parity of esteem. It would represent a new covenant between the two conflicting traditions in Ireland, a covenant wherein both would not only recognise the legitimacy of the other, but the future of all would be dependent on the equal legitimacy of both. It would be a fitting and necessary end to the final chapter in the ancient quarrel. These commitments and the principles upon which they were based remained central to the negotiations upon which everyone was now embarking. The reassurances that they provided to all sides should remove any fear of imposed settlements, while at the same time they should lay the basis for a new and more positive political expression of "the totality of relationships embracing the peoples of Ireland and Britain".

84. The UDP also expressed condolences to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs and said it hoped the Irish Government delegation would convey these comments to him. The UDP said that in October 1994 the loyalist cease-fire was called in expectation of imminent talks on the future of Northern Ireland. Today, almost three years on, the time for substantial negotiations had finally come. And this was indeed a historic opportunity to reach a lasting and stable settlement. The three strands of these negotiations were aimed at exploring the totality of relations within the British Isles. Everyone, as the elected representatives of the people, had been entrusted with the great responsibility to heal the deep divisions between nationalists and unionists, to give the people a voice, and to remove the ambiguous and often contradictory governmental decision-making on Northern Ireland, including the Province's relations with the rest of the United Kingdom, as well as relations with the Irish Republic.

85. The UDP said that the relationships within Northern Ireland were at the core of the negotiations. But inter-communal tension had, over the past years, been subjected to Irish interference, Westminster impositions, and Anglo-Irish tensions. The troubles did not emerge within a vacuum, but were in many ways the product of inconsistent, irresponsible, and negligent British and Irish state strategies. Co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, which should have been logical and natural, had suffered as a consequence. The relationship within the island of Ireland had not always been the most cordial or co-operative one. It had been marred by the insecurities and uncertainties of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. Competing claims over territory and jurisdiction had created the fundamental problems of identity and allegiance which over the past years had often been expressed through violence.

86. The UDP said it would be foolish to believe that the issues of identity and allegiance could be resolved to everyone's satisfaction at this point or even within the current negotiations. What could, however, be settled, once and for all, and unequivocally, was the perceived constitutional uncertainty which had been at the root of hostilities within Northern Ireland and the problematic relationship between the North and the South. The party said the outbreak of the troubles in 1969 was a consequence of the disputed status of Northern Ireland. While both British and Irish representatives had agreed that Northern Ireland would remain British in the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the 1925 boundary settlement, not everyone had accepted this. The 1937 rewriting of the Irish constitution made this clear when, under Eamon de Valera's personal supervision, Ireland reneged on previously negotiated state boundaries and laid claim to Northern Ireland in Articles 2 and 3. This unilateral and irredentist move had since been used as justification to forcibly unify Northern Ireland with the Republic.

87. The UDP said that the violent means in pursuit of republican aspirations had created a long list of casualties - among them the relationships between the North and the South. Consequently, many common interests had not been explored to their fullest. In an era in which economic boundaries had been disappearing and economic interests had been integrated in a wider European context, the disharmony in cross-border co-operation was most regrettable. All the people in the island of Ireland had suffered as a result.

88. The party said it welcomed the opportunity to change this situation within the context of these negotiations. Co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic on issues of agriculture, economic development, infrastructure, public transportation, tourism, and security was not only logical but highly desirable. In fact, not only the relationship within the island of Ireland needed to be reconsidered, but the relationship within the British Isles as a whole should be improved. The Irish Republic and the United Kingdom shared a common language, common industrial and technical standards, a similar legal system, and overlapping professional institutions. Accordingly, it made much more sense to review the relationships within the island of Ireland in the broader context of the British Isles and even the European Union. Shipping, fishing, the environment, migration, tourism, agriculture, and drugs, for example, were not just issues that applied purely to Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Successful policies also required co-ordination and co-operation with England, Scotland and Wales.

89. The UDP said it had argued repeatedly for the establishment of a Council of British Isles as a means for pursuing better relations and mutually beneficial co-operation across these islands. Obviously it believed that the more comprehensive approach would be more successful, but no matter whether it was the relationships within the British Isles or within the island of Ireland that needed to be considered for improvement, an environment of trust had to be created first in order for such co-operation to work. The party said the preliminary step for such a positive environment was clarity and transparency. So it had to be clear that Northern Ireland was a part of the United Kingdom - and only the United Kingdom. Irish claims to territory and jurisdiction, as embodied in Articles 2 and 3, were invalid and unlawful and thus should be rescinded. The Anglo-Irish Agreement had to be superseded for the relationships within the island of Ireland to move onto a meaningful level. The focus of the Frameworks Document on North/South relations was inadequate and seriously flawed. There was no consent for deeper integration leading to an all-Irish economy and possibly a political confederation. And last but not least, any change in Northern Ireland's constitutional status could only be arrived at with the consent of the people of the Province. And the people of Northern Ireland wished to remain British.

Therefore, only within the existing constitutional structure could a solid foundation for cross-border co-operation be built.

90. The UDP said that as long as there were competing British/Irish claims to Northern Ireland, the necessary environment for full co-operation would not exist. Articles 2 and 3 must therefore be abolished as soon as possible in order to create conditions conducive to co-operation. The withdrawal of the Irish claim to Northern Ireland would not only be a much needed confidence building measure, but was essential for the people of Northern Ireland's right to self-determination. Only in the absence of this claim would they have the space to decide freely in these negotiations whether they wished to remain part of the United Kingdom, become part of a united Ireland, or any other arrangement.

91. The UDP said the Irish Government, like the British Government, had portrayed itself as host and facilitator in this political process. Yet, when the British Government announced that it did not have any selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland, the Irish Government did not follow suit. Now the time had come for the Republic of Ireland to also claim that it had no selfish, strategic or economic interest in the North - and drop Articles 2 and 3. The relationship between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic could only improve through such a move. The cliché of "good fences make good neighbours" sprung to mind. Clarity on the constitutional issue and the border would help resolve the issues of identity and allegiance over time. The UDP said that cross-border co-operation could be developed within the given structures and would no doubt increase with wider European economic integration. It welcomed such integration whole-heartedly.

92. The UUP expressed its sympathy to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs and added that it would submit its formal statement to the Chairmen's office for distribution following the session. Continuing, the UUP said there needed to be trust and sensitivity built in to what was hoped to be achieved in Strand Two negotiations. The party, referring to the recent address given by the Sinn Féin's chief negotiator in Coalisland, stated that this was clear evidence that Sinn Féin's contribution and genuineness towards the principles of the talks was likely to change. This brought everyone else to a stark reality which had to be faced. The UUP said that the statement made at Coalisland by Sinn Féin,

that it was attending the talks to “smash the union”, had to be the greatest pre-condition to talks ever issued.

93. In continuing its reference to Sinn Féin, the UUP said it was very unhappy that the language employed by some of those sitting at the table was in any way going to lead to an increase in confidence. It was simply offensive. The UUP said it also recalled some comments made earlier by the British Government in terms of the “people of this island” and described these as vaguely offensive. The party said it agreed with earlier PUP comments that the establishment of trust was not helped by a continuing series of concessions being given to unreconstructed terrorists who now sat at the table of democracy. The party said little value seemed to be placed or recognition given that the UUP had been at the table for some considerable time and had participated in numerous previous processes which had been introduced. The party had constantly adjusted its principles in these forums, in so far as this was possible, in order to move towards the political reality of the twenty first century. This was what made it different to Sinn Féin/IRA who, by the analysis of recent statements, didn’t even wish to convey to its rank and file that the strategy of the armalite and the ballot box was finished. The NIWC raised a point of order regarding the terminology used by the UUP to describe Sinn Féin.

94. The UUP continued. The Chairman intervened at this point and stated that he hoped it would be possible, as customary, to get through the first round of remarks without interruption. Sinn Féin said while the Chairman’s comments were quite right in terms of handling the format of the meeting, he should, at the same time, be prepared to rule on those participants who were now describing others in new and different language. Sinn Féin said it had and would continue to address the “Ulster Unionist Party” as this, so why could the UUP not address Sinn Féin by its appropriate title rather than continue to use phrases such as “unreconstructed terrorists”?

95. The UUP, in response to Sinn Féin, said it was not going to be helpful or trustful for the process if any participant at the talks used language outside which was at variance to that used around the table. The UUP said that it had also listened, in the same context, to the words of the Irish Government earlier who had spoken in terms of it being in the “best

interests" to have "some form of a united Ireland". The UUP said there were many around the table who had been through this debate before. The argument for a united Ireland simply fell down. The party said Alliance had spoken with great clarity on this very issue in its earlier remarks and it welcomed this. The UUP asked why it seemed so appropriate that the people of Northern Ireland should numerically attach themselves to 3.5 million others when they could stay with 55 million and foster the continuing benefits of this relationship.

96. The UUP said it wasn't just a simple case of looking at the Republic of Ireland as a collection of individuals with whom good will could be expressed within the terms of relationships which should exist at that level. It was also about a nation which had gone through the trauma of Green Court, Goodman and others. The party said it had viewed a former Taoiseach forgetting about a £1.3 million donation from his local grocer! All this was foreign to the UUP and the Minister from the Irish Government shouldn't talk down to unionists from such a position. The UUP said it recognised that, both literally and metaphorically, it was on its own on that side of the conference table. It seemed that much was expected from the party, yet there was little sign of what was coming from the Irish Government side.

97. The UUP said it had to be remembered that when one looked at the Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland relationship there were pitfalls by the score for the UUP and remarkably few benefits. The UUP said good neighbours one would like to be, good neighbours it would be, but others and not the party had always benefited from this sort of relationship and this could not continue. The UUP said it was right and proper to spell this out at the beginning of negotiations on Strand Two. Moving on, the UUP stated that during the negotiations on the rules of procedure in 1996, the party outlined, on several occasions, a range of issues which overlapped with the business of Strand Three. The party said this point was accepted by both Governments at the time. The UUP said that nothing pertaining to the interests of Northern Ireland should therefore be precluded from Strand Two discussions.

98. In summing up, the UUP said it wished to end its remarks on a positive note. The opportunity now presented itself for the Republic of Ireland to adopt a mature attitude

towards Northern Ireland. That mature attitude had yet to be demonstrated either in the 1992 process or in the present negotiations. The UUP said it recognised the difficulties of those steeped in the republican tradition but a sovereign state needed to look at Northern Ireland with impartiality and neutrality in the same way as the British Government did. If this was not going to be the case, then the party said everyone was simply wasting the Chairmen's time. The UUP said the resolution of the differences had to come back to the principles of democracy and consent. It would move forward on that basis and it hoped others would recognise the difficulties facing it and yet its willingness to engage with those same people in attempting to find an agreeable settlement.

99. The Chairman, reflecting on the earlier interventions from the NIWC and Sinn Féin, noted that the UUP had made some comments on remarks made by another participant outside the conference room. Following this the NIWC had made some comments about remarks made inside the conference room. The Chairman said that, while he had no authority to control what was said either inside or outside the room, it seemed to him that the basis for a lack of trust among the participants was often aggravated by the language used.

100. Continuing, the Chairman said he recalled earlier meetings when the first 60-90 minutes had been given over to a discussion on participants statements to the media the previous day or evening. Furthermore many of the participants had made the point that a considerable amount of time had already been taken up in reaching this point in the negotiations. Both the UDP and Alliance had referred to this in today's session. The Chairman said that, given this position, he wished to urge and plead with the participants, while acknowledging the role which each undertook as political representatives, to try and use language and words which were both efficient in terms of the usage of time and removed potential aggravation.

101. The Chairman added that if the process failed, participants would have more than six months to go back to making inflammatory remarks. He recalled that elaborate provisions in the US Senate against personal attack had elevated the level of dialogue. The Chairman said the UUP was right to point out that the process would be difficult, since

those around the table holding diametrically opposed views would be difficult to reconcile. But any potential reconciliation would be made more difficult if aggravated language was used from here on in. The Chairman said he hoped such language could be minimised.

102. Sinn Féin said it had listened carefully to the UUP and others. Some participants, it acknowledged, were annoyed about the contents of the party's speech at Coalisland. However the party had moved the previous day to engage the media and issue a message that tamer language should have been used during that address. The party accepted this position. Ever since its arrival into the building, however, Sinn Féin said there had been several comments and descriptions levelled against it such as "fascists", "unreconstructed terrorists" and "the enemy".

103. Sinn Féin said it too believed this language should cease. The people on the outside of the process wanted to see the participants moving forward. There was therefore an urgent need to stop the name calling. The party said it recognised the need for softer language, but everyone around the table needed to recognise this also. It also had to be recognised that to make progress, participants were going to have to speak to one another. Sinn Féin said it was content to accept constructive criticism and reiterated the point that it had moved the previous day to address that specific issue. It was now a question of considering how everyone could move forward and the language needed to achieve this.

104. The NIWC said it had raised the earlier point of order because it had presented a similar one when the UKUP had described the UDP and PUP as "loyalist paramilitaries". The party said that either some basic ground rule or convention should be established on this specific point from now on.

105. The PUP said it had listened to great words being expressed by Sinn Féin about wanting to talk and search for agreement. The party asked how it was therefore possible for it to speak to Sinn Féin when the latter's declared position was that a united Ireland was the only resolution to the conflict? Democratically there was nothing wrong with a united Ireland but the PUP said it didn't accept this was the only resolution to the conflict. The party said, in a further reference to Sinn Féin, that it was time that it (Sinn Féin) began to

think more about what it was saying to others. Further evidence of this had been Sinn Féin's earlier reference to some of the PUP's opening remarks.

106. Sinn Féin intervened to say that when it had responded to the PUP's opening remarks and had agreed with one particular comment: the party had meant that it was everybody, not just it, that had decided not to put up with the situation in Northern Ireland any longer ie no second-class citizenship, but instead providing greater opportunities to match children's higher exceptions etc. Sinn Féin said the problem behind all of this comment was that the PUP would not go into a bilateral with it unless or until the UUP said yes. Sinn Féin said it was present to do just that. There was little point in challenging it for giving its opinion, since the PUP had often spoken about the only resolution being one whereby Northern Ireland remained within the United Kingdom! Sinn Féin said it was time to get round all of this. It wished to sit down with others, listen to them and be persuaded by them. All the party was asking was that it was able to present its view. There was no doubt that some stability on the use of softer language was required. The key issue, however, was that there were many in the communities expecting a great deal from the process. Sinn Féin said the process couldn't let them down.

107. The SDLP said it was somewhat surprised by the sensitivities which were developing. The party said that perhaps part of this problem was that the process was running between set piece forums and speeches contrived for a home audience. The party said there was far too much set piece stuff and not enough direct exchanges between participants. There was not enough development to express such views outside. The SDLP said the sooner the process got quickly into discussion, the sooner this problem would disappear.

108. The Chairman said he hoped this would be achieved next week when submissions would be sent in by Monday and just that kind of dialogue on real issues began on Tuesday.

109. Alliance said it welcomed the SDLP's last comments. The problem outlined by the SDLP was precisely the problem Alliance perceived with the last set of talks. That said,

Alliance concluded that there was still a need to have issues committed to paper and, in particular, proposals on realistic structures presented. The party said that if one was to follow the structures of today's business, then the participants would soon have little to do. This was why the party went along with the SDLP's comments. It was keen to get on and get into substantive negotiations. It was also keen to get on with bilaterals etc in between the larger, more formal, meetings. Alliance said it had papers ready on structures and looked forward to the discussion of these as soon as possible.

110. The NIWC said it cost nothing to be courteous and the party was always courteous to whoever it met. There was also perhaps a need to use more moderate language in terms of progressing the negotiations and it hoped this point could be borne in mind.

111. The Chairman asked for any further comments. Hearing none, he again issued a plea for more moderate language to be used. He said that while he was familiar with the tactic of demonising the enemy, the process was about establishing peace, political stability and reconciliation. The Chairman said he believed it was time to reverse the downward trend in discussions and move it on to a basis where genuine discussion and agreement could be reached. He said he hoped participants would try to be restrained outside and courteous inside. The Chairman said he looked forward to and encouraged a full day of debate next Tuesday. With those comments, he adjourned the meeting, subject to the call of the Chair, at 16.57.

Independent Chairmen Notetakers
13 October 1997