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From: Independent Chairmen Notetakers
4 July 1996

SUMMARY RECORD OF INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES
AND AGENDA FOR PLENARY SESSION - THURSDAY 4 JULY 1996 (14.10)

Those present:

Independent Chairmen	Government Teams	Parties
Senator Mitchell	British Government	Alliance Party
General de Chastelain	Irish Government	Labour Party
Mr Holkeri		Northern Ireland
		Women's Coalition
		Progressive Unionist
		Party
		Social Democratic and
		Labour Party
		Ulster Democratic
		Party
		Ulster Democratic
		Unionist Party
		United Kingdom
		Unionist Party
		Ulster Unionist Party

1. The Chairman reminded the participants that he wished to conclude proceedings at 15.00. He reiterated that all had been helpful and co-operative. Within the time constraint he wanted to ensure that the schedule was dealt with. The Chairmen had studied the proposals supplied by the parties. If all the wishes of the parties were to be accommodated there could not be any meeting during the period in question. The Chairmen had therefore tried to devise a schedule which would minimise inconvenience to most. The changes to the proposals already made in the Memorandum of 3 July were fairly modest and in reverse order were:-

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The summer break to be from 1 August through 2 September, with talks resuming on Tuesday 3 September; the days Monday 29 July, Tuesday 30 July and Wednesday 31 July to be removed from the schedule; on Monday and Tuesday in August facilities would be available for bilaterals. In relation to Monday 8 July exactly half of the parties had suggested a meeting, and half were opposed. He invited comments on this matter.

2. Dr Alderdice thanked the Chairmen for their work on the arrangements. He welcomed the effort to eliminate uncertainty and address the fatigue problem. His party was prepared to provide a team throughout July and August which would be mandated to take decisions. He welcomed the proposal for bilaterals during August. Because of the need for progress he thought it best that the participants meet on Monday 8 July. Mr Wilson assured the participants that his party would try to field a "genuine" team within the proposed schedule. In relation to 8 July, his understanding was that the Forum would meet on 8 July as an alternative to Friday 12 July. Mr Trimble said that the Chairmen's proposals were acceptable and that 8 July was now precluded in that the Forum would meet on that day.

3. Mr McMichael said that the proposals would convey the wrong impression to the public: five weeks of discussion followed by a five week break. The period was a difficult one and such a degree of inactivity by the participants could be dangerous. The idea of having bilaterals in August appealed to his party. Insofar as 8 July was concerned the activities of the present group were more important than those of the Forum.

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4. Mr Smyth disagreed with Mr McMichael on the importance of the Forum. Mr Wilson said that he had now confirmed that notices of attendance for 8 July had been issued to Forum members; therefore the present body was precluded from meeting on that date. Mr Smyth went on to say that the schedule did not provide sufficient time for discussions and requested that 29 and 30 July be considered for business. He thanked the Chairmen for their work on the schedule. Miss Kilmurray was also in favour of meeting on 29 and 30 July (and 8 July). She welcomed the bilaterals in August but would prefer that discussion occurred in that month.

5. Mr Mallon said that he would generally go along with the proposed schedule. He regretted that his party had submitted no proposal. The proposals for July presented no problem. He felt that the proposed bilaterals for August should have a point. He requested that the week commencing 22 July should be reduced from 4 working days to 3. Dr Alderdice intervened to read out a notice of invitation to a Forum meeting on 8 July. Mr Mallon said that that posed a serious question. Something was seriously wrong when a decision to hold a Forum meeting on a non scheduled day was taken aside from the present gathering. At the very least there had been a lack of courtesy and attention to detail. His party would prefer to attend Castle Buildings on Monday rather than Wednesday 10 July.

6. Sir David Fell explained the procedure relating to the arrangement of Forum meetings. The Forum members determined the dates of meeting and the Secretary of State could not prevent the Forum meeting unless he had been notified of an intention to hold negotiations on the date in question. The Chairman said that for self evident reasons the present group could not meet

on 8 July. There was a fait accompli. Mr McMichael said that clarification was needed in the matter. The present body had precedence over the Forum.

7. Mr McCrea said that the majority of the parties were represented at the Forum meetings. It had been the unanimous opinion of those representatives that the Forum should meet on 8 July. The fault lay in lack of communication within the parties and the Secretary of State could not be blamed. In relation to Miss Kilmurray's suggestion for the need to press on with business, he contrasted her hitherto limited personal involvement in the process with that of others. He went on to stress the importance of the traditional holiday period for family reasons. He had no objection to Mr Mallon's proposal to reduce business in week commencing 22 July to 3 days. He emphasised that many participants had come to the talks after a taxing election campaign and that an appropriate break was essential. Mr Ervine said that there was no doubt about the primacy of the present body over the Forum. There had been a mistake due to lack of communication. Insofar as Mr McCrea's criticism of Miss Kilmurray was concerned, it had to be borne in mind that no matter who attended the talks or for how short a time they did so on behalf of their party and in accordance with their party's arrangements. He felt that the criticism was totally unwarranted.

8. Mr McCartney congratulated the Chairman and his colleagues on the proposed schedule. He said that he personally would be present on Monday 22 July and that Mr Wilson would return on 29 July; however there would be 3 days (23, 24 and 25 July) when both would be out of the country and he was very concerned that his party could not field a delegate if a plenary session were

to take place during that period. He mentioned his responsibilities to another place and envied those without such commitments. He had a real difficulty in this matter. The Chairman said that he was not presently certain that it was possible to rule out a particular type of session for 23-25 July. Mr Curran said that he was largely happy to accept the Chairman's schedule. He saw a need to emphasise the primacy of this body over the Forum. He suggested that Thursday 25 July be removed from the schedule in order to facilitate Mr Mallon and Mr McCartney.

9. The Chairman proposed a modification to the schedule whereby 25 July was removed and both 29 and 30 July were reinstated. Mr McCartney said that this was inserting 2 days for 1 and suggested that if 2 days were dropped from the week commencing 22 July then there would only be 2 days of vulnerability for his party. Dr Alderdice and Mr Adams both had no objection to Mr McCartney's proposal. Mr Empey said that his party was better placed with regard to week commencing 22 July than for that commencing 29 July. He was content to drop one day in the former. The Chairman stressed the difficulty of suiting everybody's needs. Mr McCartney said that Mr Empey's party had more representatives to choose from and stressed that his two for two proposal would reduce his own party's vulnerability to one day.

10. The Chairman said that it seemed that the parties would wish to hold one session in plenary before the August break. If everyone could be represented on 29 July there would be advantage in holding a plenary on that date. He asked Mr McCartney if an assurance that no plenary would be held on 23 or 24 July would enable his party to accept proceedings on 22, 23

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and 24 July albeit that two of those days would be uncovered by his party. Mr McCartney said that the proposal was reasonable.

11. Mr Empey said that he would be happy to go along with this arrangement in the unique situation which existed but would be anxious to avoid setting a precedent. The Chairman said that a balance always had to be struck in the circumstances provided this was not at the expense of the overall concerns of the group or the overriding need for progress. He proposed that a plenary session should not be held on 23 or 24 July. If it were to occur on 29 July and if it required a further day then proceedings would continue into 30 July. There being no disagreement he said the schedule would be revised on this basis. In response to Miss Kilmurray's earlier request he said that the Chairmen would suggest topics for the bilaterals in August. He said that the discussions would continue at 1 pm on Tuesday 9 July but requested participants to be available from 10 am on that day for bilaterals. He foresaw that Tuesday and Wednesday would be devoted to procedure but with the possibility of some bilaterals. In response to Dr Alderdice, he undertook to provide a revised schedule and a calendar. He said that he would attempt to conclude each session by 19.00. He thanked all of the participants for their co-operation and effort and adjourned the discussion at 15.00.

[Signed]

Independent Chairmen Notetakers
4 July 1996

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