

LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

A FURTHER SUBMISSION FROM THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

1. The British Government welcomed the wide-ranging discussion which parties had on economic and social issues at the Liaison Sub-Committee meeting dealing with Confidence Building Measures on Wednesday, 4 February.
2. At its conclusion the Secretary of State on behalf of the Government acknowledged that there were a number of matters raised by parties around the table that had not been sufficiently explored or addressed and she suggested that it might help focus and guide further discussion on these matters if they were grouped together in a brief annotated agenda for the next meeting. Noting that participants would be reviewing their own contribution to the debate, she offered to provide an appropriate list for participants to consider.
3. On behalf of the British Government the Secretary of State wishes to suggest the following areas as a focus for further discussion, at least initially:

the elimination of discrimination

- promotion of equality in the employment market
- implementation of a rights agenda

the reduction of divisions in society

- support for integrated education
- provision of pre- and after-school care
- promotion of a non-sectarian public environment

the treatment of culture and heritage

- recognition of the heritage of both major traditions
 - encouraging full participation of all religious, cultural and ethnic groups.
4. In offering the list, the Government would wish to stress that it does not seek to preclude discussion on other economic and social matters which parties may wish to raise, in addition to those they tabled at the last meeting; nor does it wish to prevent participants from revisiting subjects that were discussed on previous occasions. The agenda has been drawn up and is offered simply to provide a starting point for parties to take forward further discussion.
5. The Government would also wish to stress that it recognises that these issues represent areas of great importance and significance to participants and that it is keen to hear the full range of argument and opinion. In doing so, the Government very much shares the view of others about the importance of distinguishing between those issues which constitute a broad party political agenda and those which are genuine confidence building measures that might be pursued by Government under direct rule or under whatever institutional arrangements emerge from the current Talks process. It would urge participants to keep this distinction in mind.
6. The Government hopes that participants will find the agenda useful and that it will help facilitate a continuing, positive exchange of views.

British Government

9 February 1998