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Response document to the Independent Chairmen.

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The responses to your questions are paragraphed as in your letter.

1. All participants may table motions as a right. However, the rules of procedure rule 8 determines the business of the negotiations. If a participant has a difficulty with the procedures of the negotiations, this may be referred to the Business Committee. Rule 15 indicates that the role of the Business Committee is to "advise" the chair on the "day-to-day exercise of their responsibilities...". This suggests that the chair has a latitude to control the negotiation procedure in tandem with the Business Committee. Rule 16 indicates that participants should act in "good faith". This implies a responsible commitment to the use of time. A complaint from a participant or even a recommendation from the chair should indicate to all the participants the need to progress sensibly and with an awareness of the time allocated to specific issues.

Rule 17 indicates a participant can raise a "significant" motion and receive a "fair hearing". This use of "fair" is a subjective term and has considerable latitude.

Regarding specific time limiting, this should only be relevant to satisfying the needs of being "significant". Again, this should be at the discretion of the chair and the Business Committee ultimately. Otherwise a complainant participant may input endlessly not adding to the negotiation process.

The use of the chair and the Business Committee would be used in the most extreme cases to proceed with the negotiation business.

The chair has the authority to time-limit remarks (rule 24). This can be developed more fully by the skill of the chair and the receptiveness of the participants.

2 Yes. The motion should be deemed "significant" by the chair and the Business Committee.

3 Motions should be amendable. The degrees to which a motion can be amended depends on the complexity of the motion. If it is a composite motion with lots of clauses, then amendments to this by all participants will inevitably lead to elongated discussion which may not lend itself to a satisfactory conclusion. There should as a general rule be opportunity for participants to respond to a motion by an amendment, but after negotiation, it may be necessary to fine tune with a secondary amendment. The time allocated to this three levels of dialogue should be determined by the chair and the business committee.

The order of voting is only relevant if a participant feels as though there is disadvantage. In this case a written vote may proceed.

4 Labour feels that the current difficulties in the negotiations is an attempt by the UK Unionists to pre-empt another debate on the role of the chair and the rules of procedure which are already agreed on by all participants.

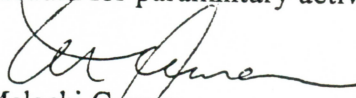
The chair should where possible establish authority over participants who show lack of commitment, or lack of good faith, to the negotiations.

The morale of participants is severely tested by insignificant, lengthy monologues from participants bent on stalling the negotiations. This should be prevented by use of application of the rules especially the use of all that is "significant".

Labour welcomes the opportunity to enter into full substantive negotiations.

We believe that Sinn Fein should be encouraged to enter this process by a meaningful participation by all parties. We do not believe that the current rhetorical climate in the negotiations particularly added to by the UK Unionists lends itself to significant progress.

We need to create a more effective negotiation climate now, in order for real substantive progress to be made. Otherwise public confidence in the peace process will dissipate, and this will create a vacuum for paramilitary activity. This mode would suit sectarian political parties.



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Labour Coalition Leader.