

Multi-Party Talks, Dublin, 16-18 February

Possible Representation Under Rule 29: Mr Andrews' Speaking Points

- On behalf of the Irish Government, I want to make clear that we are deeply conscious of the extreme gravity of the situation now confronting the talks and the peace process as a whole.
- We are very sorry that, as on the first day in London, we find ourselves having to turn our attention away from the substantive business of negotiation. But it is clearly necessary.
- The Irish Government is totally opposed to, and condemns utterly, all killings of any person, and for any purpose. We equally repudiate the use or threat of violence for political purposes.
- In addition, the principles of democracy and non-violence are the basis on which the talks are founded, and are fundamental to the integrity of the process. Any charge that they have been demonstrably dishonoured is a most serious one, and requires very careful consideration. Moreover, as we are all aware, this procedure has been invoked on a number of occasions. It is important that our rules are applied equitably and consistently.
- We are anxious to hear the views of all parties around the table on this matter, and in particular that of Sinn Fein. It is important that the party be given every chance to set out its position, including in relation to the two killings in question and to the Mitchell Principles.
- The Governments will then review all the elements involved and decide whether, and if so what, appropriate action may be required.