

POLITICAL TALKS: COMMON PRINCIPLES

(5 May 1992 16.30)

1. Taking as read the statement of 26 March 1991 in which it was accepted that the talks must focus on three main relationships, talks participants have identified a number of principles which should underlie any new political institutions in Northern Ireland.

2. It is agreed that these institutions should be -

- a. based on democratic principles and reflect the wishes of the electorate;
- b. widely acceptable, in particular in the sense of providing an appropriate and equitable role for both sides of the community, such that both the main parts of the Northern Ireland community should be able to identify with them and feel that their representatives have a meaningful function to perform;
- c. stable and durable in the sense of not being dependent on a particular election result or political deal. The system should, so far as possible, be self sustaining;
- d. capable of development, in response to changing political realities, with the agreement of all concerned;
- e. workable, in the sense of being as straightforward to operate as possible;

- f. such as to avoid any entrenchment of the main community division and to encourage the development of a society in which both main traditions would be respected;
- g. such as to provide all constitutional political parties with the opportunity to achieve a role at each level of responsibility, and to have a position proportional to their electoral strength in broad terms;
- h. able to function effectively, efficiently and decisively within clearly defined areas of responsibility;
- i. innovative, in the sense of learning from and not merely modelled on any previous arrangements;
- j. established within a defined relationship with UK institutions;
- k. competent to manage any relationship developed in strand two of the talks;
- l. capable of developing a direct relationship with EC institutions;
- m. capable of developing relationships with any devolved institutions in Great Britain present or future;
- n. capable of securing public endorsement;

- o. consistent with the maximum possible delegation of authority;
- p. such as to ensure the greatest possible degree of parliamentary scrutiny of and public accountability for the exercise of powers of government within Northern Ireland.