

STRAND I: PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS

Note by the British Government

- ◆ there is a need to create in Northern Ireland a harmonious society, free of violence, at peace with itself and in its wider relationships, in which:
 - it is accepted that each individual and community has the right to define their own identity
 - new arrangements respect the full and equal legitimacy and worth of the identity, sense of allegiance, aspiration and ethos of both the unionist and nationalist communities, and
 - there is full respect for, and protection of the civil, political, social and cultural rights of all sections of the community
- ◆ new relationships within Northern Ireland should be pursued and established by exclusively democratic, peaceful means, without resort to violence or coercion
- ◆ new arrangements in Northern Ireland should secure sufficient consensus among the parties, be acceptable to the people, give appropriate expression to the identity of each of the two main parts of the community, and uphold and apply the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem
- ◆ any new arrangements should form part of a wider agreement which addresses Northern Ireland's relationships with the rest of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, as well as between the two governments
- ◆ new arrangements should take account of the present reality, in fact and in international law, of the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, affirmed in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. They must also be founded on the principles of consent and self-determination as expressed in the Joint Declaration.
- ◆ the Government should exercise its jurisdiction in Northern Ireland with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all of the people of Northern Ireland in their diversity

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- ◆ the Government should also discharge its responsibilities in a way which does not prejudice the freedom of the people of Northern Ireland to determine, by peaceful and democratic means, its future constitutional status, whether in remaining a part of the United Kingdom or in forming part of a united Ireland
- ◆ new institutions in Northern Ireland should be:
 - based on democratic principles and reflect the wishes of the electorate
 - 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 are able to identify with them and feel that their representatives have a meaningful function to perform
 - 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
 - capable of development, in response to changing political realities, with the agreement of all concerned.
 - workable, in the sense of being as straightforward to operate as possible
 - 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
 - such as to provide all the 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
 - able to function effectively, efficiently, and decisively within clearly defined areas of responsibility

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- structured so as to incorporate sufficient checks and balances to give reassurance that any institutions would command the confidence of both main sections of the community without prejudicing workability
- innovative, in the sense of learning from and not merely modelled on any previous arrangements
- established within a defined relationship with UK institutions
- competent to manage any relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland developed in political Talks
- able to develop a role with regard to Northern Ireland's position within the EU
- capable of developing relationships with devolved institutions in Great Britain
- capable of securing public endorsement
- consistent with the maximum possible delegation of authority
- 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.

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