

IN CONFIDENCE

Northern Ireland Negotiations

Str 1(97) 2nd Mtg

**STRAND ONE, SECOND MEETING**  
**13 October 1997**

*MINUTES*

1. The meeting commenced at 10.15 with Mr Murphy in the chair. **Mr Murphy** explained that the Strand One agenda for the day consisted of clearing the minutes of the previous meeting and discussing the papers on "principles and requirements". Since these had only just been circulated, he proposed an adjournment for participants to read them before returning for a more detailed discussion. He explained also that it would be necessary to adjourn during the Prime Minister's visit that afternoon. It was agreed to proceed with the Minutes and introductory comments before adjourning.

*Minutes of Last Meeting*

2. The Minutes were agreed with only one amendment to the final sentence of the third paragraph on page 3 which should now read "...elements had been added in the Frameworks text..."

*Introductory Comments*

3. The **Alliance Party** introduced their paper, explaining that it covered both Strand One and Strand Two. In particular, they emphasised the need to avoid institutionalising divisions within Northern Ireland society.

4. The **Labour Coalition** emphasised the importance of putting aside prejudices and demonstrating a commitment to engage constructively with all other participants.

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5. The **NIWC** stressed the need to consider principles in relation to the process, the agreement, the institutions proposed and the actual processing of the agreement. They emphasised the collective responsibility of all the Talks participants as well as the role that others (trades unions, business leaders and the voluntary sector) had in agreeing an open and flexible solution on which to build a stable future for Northern Ireland.
6. The **PUP** reiterated the importance of collective responsibility, highlighting the need for institutions to be revamped to command widespread faith among the community.
7. **Sinn Féin** explained that their four main principles - freedom, justice, democracy and equality - applied to both Strand One and Strand Two. They commented that, since partition, the state of Northern Ireland had been a failure and there was a particular onus on the British Government to address this.
8. The **SDLP** emphasised the uniqueness of the Northern Ireland situation and said that, in considering structures, it would be important to look beyond the confines of the standard Anglo-American structures to devise structures which fitted the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. They commented that the interlocking nature of the Strands meant that the value of principles was only likely truly to emerge when discussions moved on to consider structures. They added that it would be important not to get bogged down in the past or to feel that this process was going to reach an agreement that would last forever; future generations would want and need to negotiate their own arrangements.
9. The **UDP** indicated that their list of principles was self-explanatory and that they, therefore, saw no need for further introduction.
10. The **UUP** agreed with the SDLP that it would be important to be creative in developing structures but expressed concern at suggestions that the Northern Ireland was unique and that the current process should not predetermine the outcome of future processes: there were lessons that



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could be learned from elsewhere in Europe and there was a need for some degree of stability, if not permanence, in arrangements.

### *Further Business*

12. Following a short adjournment for participants to study each other's papers, the meeting reconvened at 12.40. On a house-keeping point, **Mr Murphy** announced that, in the interests of Talks confidentiality, the Government would not be publishing its paper but added that what other participants did with their own papers was a matter for themselves.

13. In view of the Prime Minister's visit, it was agreed that there would be little merit in reconvening later in the day to continue discussion of Principles and Requirements. Rather, it was agreed to postpone further discussion/requests for clarification until the next meeting; and that participants would produce papers on Constitutional Issues by Friday 17 October, with a view to moving on to discussion on them following conclusion of the debate on Principles and Requirements. It was also agreed that it would be important to keep the timetabling of related discussions in each of the three Strands closely synchronised.

### *Next Meeting*

14. The next Meeting was arranged for **10.00 am on Tuesday 21 October**.

### *Communiqué*

15. The following was agreed:

"The second meeting of Strand One of the talks took place in Castle Buildings today. Participants held discussions on the first item on the agenda, "Principles and Requirements". Next week they will resume discussion on the same theme."