

ANNEX E

RELATIONS BETWEEN NEW INSTITUTIONS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

1 The sub-Committee considered possible relationships between new political institutions in Northern Ireland and the European Community (EC). The considerations set out below emerged. References to "institutions" in Northern Ireland should be interpreted by reference to the other work of the sub-Committee.

2 The Party Delegations expressed dissatisfaction both with the level of financial support from the European Community for Northern Ireland since the United Kingdom joined the Community; and with the development and application of particular Community policies to Northern Ireland. They also pointed to the fact that within the United Kingdom specific Northern Ireland regional interests may on occasions be overridden by wider interests. Their first objective for new arrangements was that they should enable Northern Ireland interests to be better promoted.

3 It was recognised that Northern Ireland institutions will work within European Community institutions as they exist at any given time. However, the Maastricht treaty would introduce new arrangements for regional representatives (see para 4 vii below); and it would be open for new institutions in Northern Ireland to promote the case for further innovation in the representation of regions in Community institutions and the recognition of regional interests in Community policies. The SDLP believe that the possibility of a more direct relationship between new Northern Ireland institutions and the institutions of the EC is a matter which should be explored. The sub-Committee also recognised that there would be scope for co-operation with the Republic of Ireland where the Republic and Northern Ireland had common interests but that any institutional expression of this relationship would be a matter for Strand II.

4 The sub-Committee noted that:

- (i) new Northern Ireland institutions would have direct contacts with the European Commission on matters of importance to Northern Ireland; the UK Government would wish to see agreed guidelines on such contacts;
- (ii) new Northern Ireland institutions would seek to ensure that Northern Ireland's interests were taken into account in the Council of Ministers; to this end they would seek representation at Council meetings and at the margins of Council meetings, at both political and official level;
- (iii) the Secretary of State would keep the new institutions informed of UK Government thinking on EC issues, and reflect the Northern Ireland interest in Cabinet discussions; it is expected that representatives of the new institutions would be able to make representations directly to other UK Ministers on EC matters;
- (iv) new institutions in Northern Ireland might well decide to set up a permanent office in Brussels to represent their interests; it would work with the UK Permanent Representation and could co-operate with other regional interests;
- (v) new institutions in Northern Ireland might well wish to seek to continue the policy of seconding Northern Ireland Civil Servants to posts within the European Community and in the UK Permanent Representation; their status would be a matter for discussion with the UK Government;

(vi) the Northern Ireland MEP's would remain an important means of promoting Northern Ireland interests, and would no doubt be briefed by the new institutions;

(vii) Northern Ireland should seek a substantial presence on the Committee of the Regions proposed in the Maastricht treaty; the UK Government, in nominating representatives, should take account of the views of the new institutions and the need to ensure significant representation of the main traditions in Northern Ireland; the UK would have 24 members and 24 alternates;

(viii) it would be the responsibility of the new institutions to implement EC policies in respect of Northern Ireland transferred matters; because the obligation in terms of EC law would nevertheless remain with the UK Government it would be necessary for the UK Government to retain powers to remedy any default. There would need to be a close co-operative relationship in this area.

5 The discussion necessarily took place against a background of uncertainty regarding the next phase of EC development. But it was recognised that there were growing calls in some quarters for the development of the Community, especially its regional dimension, and that this would have particular relevance for Northern Ireland.