



STATEMENT BY THE SDLP ON THE JOINT GOVERNMENT PAPERS ON STRANDS TWO AND THREE

The SDLP has welcomed the joint Government papers on Strands Two and Three published today.

It should now be clear to everyone that the propositions paper tabled before the parties on 12th January is fully consistent with the Frameworks document, and both are specifically endorsed by the Governments today. This is what the SDLP has maintained and this is what has been confirmed today. Claims which were made that Strand Two arrangements would only be subservient to those in Strand Three, are now seen to be utterly groundless, as we have pointed out all along.

This paper gives us a firm basis on which to negotiate the precise powers, functions, and composition of North - South institutions. In these negotiations the SDLP will aim to build on the frameworks model which is set out in paragraph 13b of the "A New Framework for Agreement":

North South institutions.... With clear identity and purpose, to enable representatives of democratic institutions, North and South, to enter into new, co-operative and constructive relationships; to promote agreement among the people of Ireland, to carry out on a democratically accountable basis delegated executive, harmonising and consultative functions over a range of designated matters to be agreed; and to serve to acknowledge and reconcile the rights, identities and aspirations of the two major traditions

Reaching agreement on North South institutions will, as has been stated above, be amongst the most difficult challenges facing all parties and both Governments in these negotiations. Healing the fractured political relationships between both parts of Ireland will take time and require considerable courage and commitment.