

27 January 1998

STRAND 3: EAST/WEST STRUCTURES

A Paper to facilitate discussion presented by the British and Irish Governments

1. This paper has been drawn up by the two Governments to facilitate negotiation by identifying what seem to be the key issues requiring agreement in Strand 3.
2. The *Proposition on Heads of Agreement* paper offers, for discussion, the proposal that there be "a new British-Irish Agreement to replace the existing Anglo-Irish Agreement and help establish close co-operation and enhance relationships, embracing [inter alia]...
 - an intergovernmental Council to deal with the totality of relationships, to include representatives of the British and Irish Governments, the Northern Ireland administration and the devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales, the meetings twice a year at Summit level
 - standing intergovernmental machinery between the Irish and British Governments, covering issues of mutual interest, including non-devolved issues for Northern Ireland, when representatives of the Northern Ireland administration would be involved."
3. For their part, the Governments remain committed to the positions set out in the *Joint Declaration* and *A New Framework for Agreement*, of which paragraphs 39-49 are particularly relevant to these issues. It is of course accepted that each of the parties may wish to contribute other ideas to the discussion, and the Governments invite their views. The final outcome depends on what can be agreed among the participants.
4. The two Governments have therefore listed below, with a view to stimulating debate, what appear to them to be the principal issues to be agreed in relation to the establishment of an intergovernmental Council and standing intergovernmental machinery.

Matters for Consideration

Intergovernmental Council

- (a) What broad purpose or purposes should the Intergovernmental Council serve?
- (b) What should be the composition and legal basis of the Council?
- (c) What should be the format, role and functions of the Council?
- (d) How might the Council operate?
- (e) What arrangements should there be for democratic accountability?
- (f) What support arrangements should there be, if necessary?
- (g) Should there be arrangements for parallel inter-Parliamentary co-operation? -
- (h) What arrangements should there be for revision and change in Council?

Standing Intergovernmental Machinery

- (a) What should be the purpose, functions and responsibilities of standing intergovernmental machinery?
- (b) How should such machinery operate?
- (c) What arrangements might be made for permanent administrative support?
- (d) How would representatives of the Northern Ireland Administration be involved when non-devolved issues for Northern Ireland were considered?
- (e) What would be the relationship of such machinery with other institutions established under a British-Irish Agreement?
- (f) What role might standing intergovernmental machinery have in respect of the workings of a new British-Irish Agreement as a whole?