

Proposal for Strategy to Achieve Progress in the Multi-Party Talks

1. There are currently four proposals tabled concerning the agenda for the remainder of the opening plenary: a joint proposal from the two Governments, a joint proposal from the UUP, DUP and UKUP, one from the SDLP and one from the Women's Coalition.
2. The two Governments' proposal of 30 July is as follows:
 1. *Opening Statements*
 2. *Discussion of comprehensive agenda for negotiations*
 3. *Consideration of International Body's proposals on decommissioning and mechanisms necessary to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning alongside negotiations in the three strands*
 4. *Adoption of comprehensive agenda*
 5.
 - a. *launch of three-stranded negotiations*
 - b. *establishment of whatever mechanisms to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning are agreed pursuant to the consideration at item 3*
 6. *Concluding remarks by the Independent Chairman*
3. The joint proposal of the UUP, DUP and UKUP of 29 July proposes that the question of the machinery necessary to carry forward work on decommissioning be considered and established before the comprehensive agenda for the three-stranded negotiations is discussed and adopted and the substantive negotiations are launched. In contrast, the other participants agree that the launch of the three-stranded negotiations should take place at the same time as the establishment of whatever mechanisms were agreed to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning, pursuant to earlier consideration of the International Body's proposals on decommissioning and mechanisms.
4. At a bilateral meeting on 25 July between the Government delegation and the UUP, the UUP said that their problem with the Governments' proposals was that they in effect meant that, when the three strands got down to real business, consideration of decommissioning would only be starting. They had a political worry that if the IRA ceasefire was reinstated Sinn Fein would be participants in the talks before there were arrangements in place to cover decommissioning. In such a situation, Sinn Fein could simply procrastinate on the issue. In the UUP's view, before the end of the plenary session and the commencement of the substantive negotiations, participants had to decide such questions as what decommissioning meant, how it was going to be achieved, verification, the terms of reference of the working group and what the remit of the commission would be.

5. The UUP agreed that what they wanted was a certain level of particularity for the decommissioning "strand" at the time the three-stranded negotiations were launched.
6. It may be possible to put forward a compromise which would be a development of ideas thrown up by the UUP. The compromise would extend the discussion on the comprehensive agenda for the negotiations, so that it also covered discussion of the agenda for the sub-committee on decommissioning. In addition, the adoption of the comprehensive agenda would also include the adoption of the agenda for the sub-committee. Finally, both the negotiations and the sub-committee would be launched in parallel. This would allow the three strands and the decommissioning "strand" to be at the same stage when the substantive work started. It would preserve the principle that the sub-committee on decommissioning would work in parallel with the negotiations in the three strands, but it would extend the principle to cover the discussion and adoption of all the agendas.
7. The Governments' proposal of 30 July could therefore be amended as follows:
 1. *Opening Statements*
 2.
 - a. *discussion of comprehensive agenda for negotiations*
 - b. *consideration of International Body's proposals on decommissioning, mechanisms necessary to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning alongside negotiations in the three strands and agenda for work of any such mechanism*
 3.
 - a. *adoption of comprehensive agenda for negotiations*
 - b. *adoption of agenda for any mechanism necessary to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning alongside negotiations in the three strands*
 4.
 - a. *launch of three-stranded negotiations*
 - b. *establishment of whatever mechanisms to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning are agreed pursuant to the consideration at items 2 and 3*
 5. *Concluding remarks by the Independent Chairman*
8. On 6 June 1996 the two Governments proposed the following terms of reference for such a sub-committee:

To secure implementation of all aspects of the report of the International Body, including:

- (a) *agreement on the modalities of decommissioning on the basis of the guidelines contained in paragraphs 36 [to] 50 of the Report of the International Body;*
- (b) *advice to both Governments, in the light of those discussions, on the legislative and practical implications of the course which is recommended; and*
- (c) *agreement on any other arrangements necessary for implementation of the Report.*

9. These proposed terms of reference might be extended so as to have an agenda for the decommissioning "strand" to set along the agendas for the three strands as follows (paragraph numbers refer to the International Body's report):

- (a) *agreement on the modalities of decommissioning on the basis of the guidelines contained in paragraphs 36 [to] 50 of the Report of the International Body, with reference in particular to:*
 - *the method or methods to be adopted (paragraph 43)*
 - *the role and composition of an independent commission (paragraph 40);*
- (b) *advice to both Governments, in the light of those discussions, on the legislative and practical implications of the course which is recommended, to include:*
 - *consideration of the draft legislative proposals to be tabled by the two Governments to enable the Report of the International Body to be given effect in their respective jurisdictions;*
 - *any further measures necessary for the putting into effect of the method or methods of decommissioning decided upon in accordance with paragraph (a) above;*
- (c) *agreement on any other arrangements necessary for implementation of the Report, to include:*
 - *consideration of an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the three-stranded negotiations (paragraph 34);*
 - *other (supporting) confidence building measures (paragraph 38);*
 - *timing and sequencing of decommissioning (paragraph 38).*

10. The International Body's report states:

- 34 *The parties should consider an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge. Such an approach represents a compromise. If the peace process is to move forward, the current impasse must be overcome. While both sides have been adamant in their positions,*

both have repeatedly expressed the desire to move forward. this approach provides them that opportunity.

- 35 *In addition, it offers the parties an opportunity to use the process of decommissioning to build confidence one step at a time during negotiations. As progress is made on political issues, even modest mutual steps on decommissioning could help create the atmosphere needed for further steps in a progressive pattern of mounting trust and confidence.*
11. It could be argued that some aspects of the work on decommissioning have a certain priority over the three-stranded negotiations. The arrangements for decommissioning obviously have to be in place before decommissioning can commence. Consequently, depending on the stage at which decommissioning is to take place during the process of negotiation, agreement will have to be reached at an early stage on the arrangements as to how it would take place.

Proposal of the Women's Coalition

- Discussion of the comprehensive agenda, followed by its adoption
- (i) Discussion of the International Body's proposals on decommissioning and
(ii) consideration of the decisions necessary to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning , followed by agreement on these decisions
- (i) Launch of the three-stranded negotiations and
(ii) establishment of agreed machinery to carry forward work on decommissioning.

Proposal of the SDLP:

The SDLP proposal follows essentially the two Governments' proposal of 25 July, ie.

- Discussion of comprehensive agenda
- Discussion of the International Body's proposal on decommissioning, covering three elements:
 - (i) discussion of proposals,
 - (ii) participants' commitment to work constructively to implement all aspects of the report of the International Body and
 - (iii) proposal to establish a sub-committee on decommissioning
- Adoption of the comprehensive agenda for negotiations
- Launch of three-stranded negotiations; establishment of sub-committee on decommissioning.