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22.7.96 - 9.30 am

A PROPOSITION FROM THE [BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS] 22 JULY 1996

1. In our view there is an urgent necessity to make decisive forward movement in these negotiations before we break for the summer.
2. We need to provide visible reassurance to the people of Northern Ireland that there is a peaceful political way forward; that there is a genuine prospect that dialogue between political representatives can lead to a comprehensive political settlement which could resolve intercommunal tension in Northern Ireland and underpin a lasting peace.
3. To achieve that kind of forward movement we need to reach agreement on the agenda for the rest of the opening plenary and settle our rules of procedure. To maximise the time available for substantive dialogue we believe those issues should be settled today.
4. That task should not be beyond us. We have been conferring together on these issues since 12 June. Under the skilful guidance of Senator Mitchell there have been full opportunities for every delegation to present and explain its point of view. All delegations have also been able to pursue issues in a range of bilateral meetings, and important understandings and agreements have been reached in such meetings.
5. Substantial progress has been made in round table discussion in narrowing the remaining areas of difference, particularly in respect of the rules of procedure; and this process has been taken forward in some respects in subsequent bilaterals and in last week's round of discussions between individual delegations and the Independent Chairmen.
6. Delegations have also commented extensively both in round table discussion and bilaterals on the proposed agenda for the rest of the opening plenary session, making it possible to identify a basis for agreement.

CONFIDENTIAL

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7. Against that background, the [two Governments] propose that
- Senator Mitchell and his colleagues should be invited to table draft rules of procedure reflecting their best judgement of what is likely to prove acceptable to all delegations;
 - delegations should also be invited to consider the attached draft agenda for the rest of the opening plenary, which reflects the two Governments' judgement of what is likely to prove acceptable to all delegations. The Government delegations will be happy to explain their judgement in detail at the appropriate moment.
 - the plenary should be reconvened at 10am on Wednesday 24 July, with a view to agreeing the agenda and the rules of procedure by lunchtime.

8. We believe it should be possible to reach agreement on these texts relatively quickly, but delegations will have opportunities before Wednesday morning to raise any outstanding concerns of real significance for them in bilateral contacts with other delegations. Subject to that the two Governments propose that

- after determined efforts to achieve consensus, agreement should be reached on the agenda and the rules of procedure on the basis of sufficient consensus.

9. Additionally, the two Governments propose that

- [■ business on 23 July should include an informal round table discussion of recent events in Northern Ireland and their implications for the talks process];

CONFIDENTIAL

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- once established the Business Committee should immediately bring forward proposals for an intensive schedule of meetings which would enable the work of the opening plenary session to be completed before any summer break.

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