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Opening Plenary
: Addressing
Decommissioning

FROM: D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
23 JULY 1996

any further comments you may receive, the next step will be to prepare a statement and the approach it represents with Ministers and then with the Irish, perhaps via the Secretariat. I should be grateful if you would take this forward.

(signed)

cc:	Mr Thomas (L&B)	-B
	Mr Legge	-B
	Mr Bell	-B
	Mr Watkins	-B
	Mr Steele	-B
	Mr Stephens	-B
	Mr Beeton	-B
	Mr Maccabe	-B
	Mr Perry	-B
	Mr Lavery	-B
	Mr Whysall (L&B)	-B
	Ms Checksfield	-B
	Ms Mapstone	-B
	Mrs McNally (L&B)	-B

D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
CB 22317

Ms Harrison - B

RESUMED OPENING PLENARY: ADDRESSING DECOMMISSIONING

Thank you for the draft you circulated on 22 July, which obviously builds on the Opening Scenario document.

2. Unionists and, I suspect, Ministers would probably wish to see an explicit commitment to parallel decommissioning and I think we should probably incorporate such a reference in the draft, if only as a tactical measure to see how far we can get with the Irish. I suggest adding

"including the approach referred to in paragraphs 34 and 35 in which some decommissioning would take place during the negotiations, rather than before or after"

at the end of the first sentence.

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
TEAM
22 JUL 1993

3. Subject to any further comments you may receive, the next step would be to clear the draft statement and the approach it represents with Ministers and then with the Irish, perhaps via the Secretariat. I should be grateful if you would take this forward.

(signed)

SECOND EIRE OFFICIAL PLenary, PAPER ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE

The constitutional issue and its appropriate handling is for success in the negotiations. For the documents, much of the ground has been covered in earlier documents and agreements, in particular, the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985, the Joint Declaration 1993, and Frameworks for the Future 1995. These documents chart the advances made by the two Governments in reaching agreement on major points of principle with regard to the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.

2. The key principle in this respect is the principle of consent. The constitutional guarantees in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973 was reaffirmed in the later agreements referred to above. The joint agreements convey the Irish Government's acceptance that the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.. In addition, the report of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, accepted by all parties participating in the Forum except Sinn Fein, further affirms the principle of consent.

3. It is clear that the application of this principle means that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom will not change in the foreseeable future. Once this is accepted, emphasis in negotiations shifts to agreeing structures which can successfully provide reassurance to both sides of Northern Ireland of absolute protection for equality of status and the rights

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