

Rules and procedures for Plenary

14th June 1996

Paper by Ulster Democratic Party

1. The Independent Chairman will preside over all business relating to the negotiations. He will exercise their functions in an impartial and even handed manner.
2. The Chairman will have responsibility for convening, re-scheduling and adjourning meetings, in consultation, as he considers appropriate, with the participants. However, any participant may request an adjournment of up to 20 minutes at a time and the Chairman shall refuse such requests only if they are made with unreasonable frequency.
3. Where any participant does not attend a meeting at a previously agreed time and fails to provide notice of their inability to attend, the Chairman of that meeting may proceed to conduct the meeting in their absence. If a delegation should withdraw temporarily or permanently from any aspect of the negotiations, the Chairman will be free to proceed with business with the remaining participants, notwithstanding such withdrawal.
4. The Chairman of each meeting will be responsible for the orderly conduct of business and will conduct the proceedings so as to allow an opportunity for a full and fair hearing of all the issues.
5. All remarks shall be addressed through the Chairman. Time limits on interventions may be imposed at the Chairman's discretion.
6. The Chairman's ruling on all individual questions of procedure and order shall be final. In arriving at such rulings the Chairman may apply the rules for determining sufficient consensus.
7. The Chairman may at any time ask one or more of the participating negotiating teams to meet him; and will accede to any reasonable request for a meeting from any negotiating team(s).
8. Following the conclusion of the opening Plenary, the appropriate Chairmen will convene meetings of the negotiations within the three strands and any sub-committees established within the plenary.
9. The Independent Chairman of the Plenary may convene further meetings of the Plenary as he considers necessary, or on the request of the parties, in the light of developments across the negotiations as a whole.
10. Changes and additions to these rules of procedure shall be made only with the agreement of all participants.

Agenda

11. The Business Committee shall establish and maintain a calendar for the negotiations as a whole and within the various formats. The timing and duration of meetings in the various formats shall be determined by the relevant Chairman in consultation with the participants in accordance with this calendar.
12. The agenda for each meeting of the negotiations shall be settled by the participants on the basis of proposals put forward by the Chairman in accordance with the overall agenda for the relevant format, and taking into account the indicative calendar and the advice of the Business Committee.

Decision Taking

13. If it appears to the Chairman, after a reasonable period of discussion, that there is no unanimity, he may follow one or more of the courses of action set out below:
 - (a) the Chairman may consult with the participants, with a view to putting forward a solution that he believes will secure agreement; and/or
 - (b) the Chairman may invite the participants to set up a working group representative of all participants.
 - (c) the Chairman may seek the agreement of all the participants to refer the matter to a group of experts for advice, requesting a report within an agreed period.
14. If, after the participants have considered any further proposals arising from one or more of the courses of action set out above, it appears to the Chairman that there is no unanimity on a particular point, the Chairman shall have the discretion to determine whether sufficient consensus, as defined in paragraph 17, exists to allow negotiations to proceed.
15. Where it does not prove possible to achieve either unanimity or sufficient consensus to proceed, the Chairman will work, in consultation with the participants, to seek to remove obstacles to the reaching of agreement.
16. The rules for establishing sufficient consensus are set out in paragraph 17 below. Sufficient consensus will apply in the Plenary. Sufficient consensus will also apply in committees and sub-committees of the Plenary and in sub-committees of the Business committee.
17. A particular proposition may to be deemed to have sufficient consensus where the Chairman is satisfied both that:
 - (a) having regard to the political parties' voting strengths according to the percentage of the valid poll each received Northern Ireland wide at

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the elections on 30 May 1996, that it is supported by the parties which, taken together, clearly obtained a vote exceeding a threshold of 66% of the valid poll, therefore indicating broad acceptability in both unionist and nationalist communities; and,

- (b) that the proposition commands the support of 7 parties.

1. Adoption of rules of procedure.
2. Approval and endorsement of independent chairman under the rules of procedure.
3. Acceptance by independent chairman of the rules of procedure.
4. (a) Discussion of decommissioning proposals, and determination of time of commencement, duration and completion of its implementation.
(b) Determination of the circumstances in which failure by any participant to both meet and honour:
 - (i) the Declaration making clear their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence; and
 - (ii) the terms of 4(a) above;will result in the exclusion of such participant from any negotiations.
5. Discussion of the circumstances in which a Party not eligible to participate in the negotiations *ad hunc* subsequently claims to have qualified for participation.
6. Appointment of Business Committee.
7. Opening statements by the leaders of participatory delegations.
8. End of Opening Plenary.