

Confidential

Multi-Party Talks

Daily Report - 24 September 1996

1. In summary, a Plenary session this afternoon debated draft guidelines on confidentiality prepared by the Chairman and agreed to release to the media the two Governments' judgment on the Alliance complaint. The two Governments had a number of meetings during the day to pursue work on a joint paper to be presented to the UUP tomorrow. The key point at issue was the response which should be given to the UUP in relation to the continuity which the latter have been seeking between the envisaged committee on decommissioning and the International Commission.
2. The Chairman opened the Plenary session this afternoon by proposing that the two Governments' judgment on the Alliance complaint be made public. Linking this to the confidentiality issue, the DUP accused Alliance of a breach of confidentiality in the form of their leader's public criticism of this judgment yesterday. The UKUP and Alliance suggested that the confidentiality rule should apply only to negotiations in the strict sense and not to surrounding matters such as these representations.
3. In the subsequent debate on the Chairman's draft guidelines on confidentiality, the British Government, the UUP and the DUP indicated that they would be suggesting amendments on one or two points. The Chairman is to circulate a revised version reflecting these. Other issues which arose included a UKUP demand for verbatim minutes of a recent controversial session and proposals for regular media briefings by the Chairmen of the three strands.
4. The Plenary was adjourned subject to the Chair's call. The Chairman indicated to us that he intended to devote the remainder of today and tomorrow to individual meetings with the parties and did not anticipate reconvening the Plenary this week.
5. The Government delegation, led today by Minister Coveney, had an intensive series of bilaterals with the British Government to resolve a remaining point of difficulty in the draft joint paper promised following yesterday's trilateral with the UUP.
6. Following earlier unsuccessful British efforts to have the Chairman of the Commission designated at this stage and added to the membership of the committee, we made clear that we had no instructions to go beyond a general readiness to make technical experts available to the committee. We spent much of the day blocking further British attempts either to achieve their original purpose using more oblique formulations or to ascribe a putative leadership role on the Commission to international experts whom the Governments would make available. We made clear that our Ministers would be most unlikely to agree to any language which implied the



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establishment of an "inchoate Commission" at this stage. We also emphasised the onus on the British Government to explain their ideas in detail for the benefit of our Ministers.

7. We also expressed fundamental reservations, on both practical and political/presentational grounds, about the notion of General De Chastelain combining the chairmanship of the Commission with his chairmanship of Strand Two. Acknowledging the General's particular suitability for the former role, we asked the British side to accept, as a necessary corollary, that he would have to be replaced in Strand Two. In response, the British side made clear their unwillingness to move the General from Strand Two (with a reference to the Prime Minister's personal involvement in settling these arrangements).
8. At the conclusion of our discussions this evening, agreement was reached ad referendum to our Ministers on a formulation whereby the Governments "would envisage" the international experts "playing an appropriate part" in the work of the Commission. (A separate message refers). Subject to the necessary approval being obtained, the paper would be finalised in these terms and handed over by the British Government to the UUP tomorrow for discussion at a further trilateral early next week.

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