Multi-Party Talks

Daily Summary - 17 September 1996

1. The Government delegation today consisted of the Tanaiste and the Minister for Justice.

2. The two Governments held separate bilateral meetings this morning with the UUP for the purpose of briefing the latter on our respective pieces of draft legislation on decommissioning.

3. In an initial meeting, British officials supplied copies of the British draft Bill to the UUP team (Trimble, Maginnis, Empey and Alan McFarland) and provided technical clarification. The mood of the meeting was later described as positive and constructive. The envisaged session with British Ministers could not take place within the time available and was deferred until this afternoon at 5pm. Further technical clarification will also be provided.

4. The Irish draft Bill was shown to the UUP by officials, who also provided clarification (and are to continue this at a follow-up meeting later today). The UUP team then met the Tanaiste and the Minister for Justice. A detailed note on this meeting follows. In broad terms, some unease was created by indications of a possible UUP intention to raise the hurdles in relation to the International Commission and other aspects of the legislation envisaged by both Governments. The meeting also left key questions open about the UUP's willingness to match the two Governments' exceptional gesture (in showing them the draft legislation) by committing themselves to an early "exit strategy" from the Plenary into the three-stranded negotiations.

5. The two Governments compared notes over lunch. The British Government assessed the outcome in similar terms and agreed that tomorrow's trilateral meeting would be of key importance in establishing UUP good faith in this matter. The two Governments are to meet tomorrow morning to prepare this meeting, which is scheduled for 4pm in the afternoon.

6. The Tanaiste and the Minister for Justice also had a bilateral with the Chairmen (Holkeri and De Chastelain).

David Donoghue
17 September 1996