

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE TAOISEACH

Outline speaking notes

1. Very much appreciate the personal attention you have devoted to this subject.
2. Vital that the two Governments continue to work in the closest co-operation at this extremely delicate stage.
3. Substantive inclusive negotiations now seem a real possibility. Sinn Féin are on board and Trimble is working hard to find ways of remaining engaged. Even the DUP is trying to stay no more than semi-detached.
4. Obviously our shared and immovable target is to launch substantive negotiations on 15 September.
5. We had hoped to clear the way for that on 9 September but the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, has forced the postponement of the UUP "Executive Committee" meeting from 6 September to 13 September. (Large, unwieldy body, cannot realistically meet other than on a Saturday.) Trimble cannot pre-empt the Committee's decision by participating in meetings with Sinn Féin present before 13 September, and he almost certainly will not attend on 9 September.
6. This will put a lot of weight on 15 September. Careful choreography needed. My officials will let yours have a revised procedural motion for discussion at Monday's Liaison Group meeting in Belfast. There could be a case for tabling it on 9 September so that participants do not feel bounced and have a chance to reflect. Equally, it would give the two Governments a firm public platform.

7. We then need to maximise the chances of a positive outcome from the UUP Executive Committee meeting. UUP "consultations" have generally supported direct engagement with Sinn Féin, but three MP s have already come out publicly against it. Trimble needs all the help we can give him:

- confidence building measures: Paul Murphy has written to him on a miscellaneous collection of issues;
- I owe him a reply to his letter of 30 June about the two Governments' decommissioning proposals. With one minor exception, the text has already been agreed with you;
- we will be deploying all the arguments for UUP participation in press articles etc;
- in my judgement the two Governments can and should go a little further in the presentation of their position on consent and decommissioning;
- I will meet Trimble [on 11 September] to draw all these threads together and urge UUP participation.

8. On consent a joint commitment from the two Governments to the principle as set out in the Downing Street Declaration will be helpful, and I welcome Ray Burke's helpful statement on this in the News of the World. At his meeting with Paul Murphy on Tuesday, Trimble sought to extend the application of the concept by seeking confirmation that both Governments were committed to the requirement for "sufficient consensus" in the talks and to putting any agreed outcome to the people by referendum. This does not seem to cause problems for either of us.

9. On decommissioning it is in my judgement essential that the two Governments should make some move which would enable Trimble to acquiesce in our decommissioning proposals. I hope we could make clear that our commitment to work to achieve "due progress on decommissioning [alongside progress in the substantive political negotiations]" means that - without any guarantees and without binding anyone else - we will be working to achieve some actual decommissioning of illegal weapons during the negotiations.
10. Perhaps more significantly, Trimble has been making much of the alleged impossibility of the two Governments living up to their commitments of 16 July, which envisaged (as you and I agreed) that the Independent Commission would be in a position from 15 September to table options for draft schemes for decommissioning for discussion with the parties. He will be able to extract considerable comfort from a reaffirmation of that previous joint position.
11. As to the Chairmanship issue, we want the same outcome: De Chastelain to chair the Independent Commission and Mitchell to chair strand two. We need the UUP to vote for the necessary amendment to the rules of procedure, and it will be awkward for Trimble to vote for Mitchell as chair of strand two. He has offered to support a fudge in which De Chastelain would remain the nominal chair with either of the other Chairmen able to act as alternate. If you can support this we can ensure that De Chastelain and Mitchell deliver the desired outcome.
12. Perhaps the Liaison Group could work up a revised text for us both to consider.