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Appendix 1

[Plan tabled with the Irish side]

31 July 1997

APPROACH TO THE LAUNCH OF SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS ON 15 SEPTEMBERA paper by British officials for consideration in the Liaison Group

In the light of the Ministerial discussion on 29 July, the following suggestions are put forward as a basis for developing an agreed joint approach to the launch of substantive negotiations on 15 September.

1. Both Governments, but especially HMG, will seek to win wider support for their joint proposals on decommissioning and may consider together what further clarification could be offered in respect of those proposals to meet genuine Unionist concerns.
2. Commencing in the last week of August, the two Governments will orchestrate a series of practical steps towards the agreed objective of ensuring that the Independent Commission is fully operational on 15 September.
3. At the plenary on 9 September after Sinn Féin, if it has by then joined the process, has affirmed its total and absolute commitment to the Mitchell principles, the two Governments (having offered any further clarification which may be appropriate) might invite the Chairmen to put their proposals on decommissioning to the vote once again. [Changes to the timetable envisaged in the "possible conclusions" and in the clarifications offered on 16 July would need to be incorporated.]
4. If the proposals on decommissioning again fail to secure sufficient consensus support the two Governments might invite the Chairman to seek participants' support for a procedural motion enabling the three strands to commence discussion of substantive issues on 15 September while leaving the issue of decommissioning unresolved. A draft of such a motion is at Annex A.

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5. If that motion too fails to secure sufficient consensus support the two Governments might seek a brief adjournment and then announce that in the light of the plenary's decisions they had concluded that the prospects for forward movement in the multi-party negotiations in present circumstances were poor; that they had therefore decided to suspend those negotiations; that they intended to carry forward the search for agreement on a comprehensive political settlement in a different way; and that they invited all the participants to meet them on 15 September for that purpose. A draft of such a statement is at Annex B.
6. On 15 September the two Governments might then launch substantive negotiations on a revised basis. A draft of what might be said is at Annex C.

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