

MEETING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION: LINES TO TAKE AND DISCUSSION POINTS

We remain absolutely committed to the process and will put all our efforts into making it work. We believe it can and should reach agreement by next Spring.

We are grateful for all the support you have given, in talks and publicly, for a commonsense, reasonable approach.

Will do all we can to facilitate progress in the talks, in the more informal, though intensive, formats planned in advance of the review plenary. We welcome participants taking responsibility for talks organisation as they have done this week.

We cannot force parties to engage, however: we can only facilitate *their* agreement *with* each other. How could we best do that? How do you see prospects?

[*Target date of May: NIWC may seek reassurance this is still the plan.*]

We see no reason why there should not be agreement by May: there is substantial convergence, the challenge is to find a way of bringing it to the surface. We see dangers in the process dragging on. It remains our firm target to have an outcome next Spring]

[*And if there is no agreement in talks?*] We are determined to seek agreement through the talks. We see no reason why they should not deliver. It has got to be agreement commanding cross-community support, capable of approval in a referendum. Of course the pursuit of a settlement capable of meeting those criteria would always be a primary objective for us.

[*Start preparing now to fight a referendum campaign.*] We are already thinking about what we should do in the referendum context. It needs careful consideration, though: too hard a sell by Government could be counterproductive.

[*Involvement of women in future political institutions: the NIWC have proposed quotas in a new Assembly.*] Will do all we properly can to

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increase the proportion of women in public and political life - though the terms of a settlement, on this as on anything else, cannot be imposed.

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