

CONFIDENTIAL**TAB K****POSSIBLE POINTS TO MAKE IN A PRESS RELEASE**

The Prime Minister met representatives of Sinn Féin as part of an ongoing series of meetings with the parties involved in the talks. The Prime Minister repeated that he had always wanted an inclusive and that he was pleased that, because of the IRA ceasefire and their commitment to the Mitchell principles, Sinn Féin were now engaged in the process. He wanted them to remain part of the process. That, of course, means that the IRA ceasefire must remain in place and Sinn Féin must continue to be committed to the Mitchell principles.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the talks process and to trying to find a negotiated settlement by May, firmly founded on the principle of consent. The Prime Minister welcomed the recent intensification of the process and the fact that this week progress had been made towards agreement among the parties on the key issues to be discussed and the format for the talks in the New Year.

The Prime Minister also reminded Sinn Féin of the Government's commitment to taking measures to enhance confidence in all parts of the community and reminded them of some of the things which had been done recently.

There was also a useful discussion of the themes emerging in the negotiations and how these might indicate an eventual settlement.

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