

NORTHERN IRELAND: MULTI-PARTY TALKS

Lines to take

1. Naturally disappointed that greater progress was not possible over the past two weeks. However, the parties have a clearer understanding of each others' positions and have agreed to resume negotiations in mid January with renewed determination.
2. The talks process offers a vehicle for moving towards a comprehensive agreement which could settle all the inter-related issues which need to be resolved if there is to be peace, political stability and reconciliation here in Northern Ireland.
3. The prize is worth the effort. We are looking for new arrangements which could win the allegiance of both Unionists and nationalists.
4. The rules of the talks mean that any agreed outcome must have widespread support in both communities. Neither side can lose, but all parties will need to show greater confidence and greater willingness to adjust details of their positions if the talks are to produce a settlement which would represent a victory for all.
5. It will not be easy. Participants have to contend with the burdens of history and with deep seated fears and suspicions within their own communities. They all need our prayers and support during this period of reflection and when the talks resume.

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