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FROM: CLARE SALTERS
International and Planning Division
13 October 1997

cc: as attached

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: 13 OCTOBER 1997

Summary

1. A productive day which saw a useful discussion of Principles and Requirements on Strand 1; a largely successful Prime Ministerial visit; and some helpful discussion of wording of the Strand 3 paper with the Irish.

Detail

Internal meeting

2. A combined Ministerial Information Group/internal pre-brief was held at 08.45 (without London input because the VCR was not working). The main topic of discussion was the arrangements for the Prime Minister's visit later that afternoon. Other Talks related work included the need to table the Strand 2 paper by noon that day and to agree the Strand 3 paper with the Irish. Both of these had been cleared by our own Ministers.

Strand 1 meeting

3. The Strand 1 meeting commenced at 10.15. Following the approval of the minutes of the last meeting (with one minor amendment), each delegation gave a brief introduction of their

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respective papers on Principles and Requirements. In view of the fact that the papers had only recently been circulated and participants had not yet had the chance to digest them fully, it was agreed to adjourn for an hour.

4. When the meeting reconvened at 12.30 it was agreed that due to the Prime Ministerial visit that afternoon it would not be productive to aim to complete discussions on these papers that day. Instead it was agreed that it would be helpful to have a debate at the next meeting of Strand 1 for clarificatory rather than negotiatory purposes. In order to ensure that progress on the three Strands was made broadly in sync it was also agreed that participants would produce papers on Constitutional Issues with a view to commencing discussion on these after the conclusion of the debate on Principles and Requirements. The detail of the Strand 1 meeting is recorded separately in the official note.

Other internal meetings

5. Much of the afternoon was taken up with the Prime Minister's visit which appeared to have been a great success (with the exception of the debate at Connswater). Much of the internal discussion focused on tactics both for the day's Strand 1 meeting and for subsequent Strands 2 and 3 meetings. It was agreed that it would be important to address the format of the negotiations in future; many participants had commented that, in their current format, the discussions were unwieldy and they had expressed a preference for bilateral or multi-lateral working. The Minister's view was that, whereas this might be a useful approach in the future, it was important initially to stick with the current process in order to build confidence and trust between the participants which could subsequently facilitate bilateral and multi-lateral working.

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Meeting with the Irish

6. At 6.20 Mr Stephens and Mr Hill met with Mr Donoghue and Mr Cooney to discuss the wording of the Strand 3 paper (working from David Brooker's 13 October revise). The majority of the changes which had been made were agreed, with some minor amendments, but there was substantial discussion over the need to reflect the role of the Inter-Governmental Conference in any issues which might, in the future, be devolved (with particular reference to law & order and security). After a lengthy discussion on the subject, some possible wording was agreed which the Irish agreed to put to their Ministers.

(Signed)

Ms C P SALTERS
IPL
11 Millbank, Ext 0209

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