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**PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH ROBERT MCCARTNEY: 15 JANUARY**

This is to provide briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with Robert McCartney, leader of the UKUP, on Thursday 15 January. The Prime Minister last met Mr McCartney on 19 May 1997 when he accused the Government of operating a policy of appeasement designed to bring Sinn Fein into the talks and create the conditions for Irish reunification by instalments. It is likely that Mr McCartney will return to these key themes in his meeting with the Prime Minister and in addition attack the Propositions on Heads of Agreement and Dr Mowlam's meetings with prisoners in the Maze Prison.

At a meeting with Dr Mowlam on 5 January Mr McCartney criticised the talks process alleging that it was deepening division between the communities and that it would only work with republican support which had to be bought at a price. He believes that his decision to leave the Talks when Sinn Fein entered has been vindicated by subsequent events. His reaction to the Propositions on Heads of Agreement is not yet known but our contacts with his party colleagues indicate that the UKUP, as an integrationist party, is unlikely to welcome proposals which do not reflect that philosophy. However, they have acknowledged that the proposals are quite Unionist friendly, while arguing that this probably represents the high point for Unionists and the proposals can be expected to be diluted during negotiations. In particular Mr McCartney is likely to





focus on his view that cross-border bodies are intended to evolve, having a "dynamic" character (a phrase from the Framework Document).

Mr McCartney has criticised Dr Mowlam's meeting with loyalist prisoners and the Government's management of the Maze prison which he believes has been corrupted in favour of keeping the talks process together. It is very likely that he will urge the Prime Minister to introduce a stronger security policy within the Prison citing the recent murder and escape as reasons for effecting such a policy.

The Prime Minister might wish to consider convincing Mr McCartney that the Government is not engaged in a policy of appeasement towards Sinn Fein and attempt to persuade him of the merits of the Propositions on Heads of Agreement and the desirability of the UKUP returning to the Talks. Mr McCartney's prime target in the Talks is Mr Trimble and it is important that Mr McCartney should not leave the meeting with any further ammunition with which to attack Mr Trimble. The Prime Minister may therefore wish to provide cover for Mr Trimble by pointing to the safeguards for Unionists inherent in the process: the sufficient consensus rule, by which agreement requires the concurrence of representatives of a majority of each of the two communities. The Government has also made clear that no proposals emerging from the Talks would be put to Parliament without the support of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland voting in a referendum. In addition on 24 September the Talks' participants, with the exception of Sinn Fein, expressed their commitment to the principle of consent.

Tactically the best that the Prime Minister may hope to achieve from the meeting is to challenge Mr McCartney's analysis of the Talks process, talk him through the Propositions on Heads of Agreement text and refute any allegations which he may make about the Government's management of the Maze Prison.





ANNEX

## PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH ROBERT MCCARTNEY MP

## Key Points To Make

I have attached in the Annex some key points for the Prime Minister to make to Mr McCartney and will provide an update on any public pronouncements which he may make on the Propositions on Heads of Agreement text before the meeting.

- The propositions, while in the name of the Governments, derive in a very real sense from the views of all parties to the talks which arise in the talks expressed both in bilateral meetings and in the public discussions which have taken place. The possible proposals are our best guess at what could be a generally acceptable outcome.
- The propositions are consistent with the achievement of Unionist objectives.
- Nothing has been set in stone and the talks' parties may table their own proposals alongside.
- Detailed negotiations will now move forward and it will be up to the parties to agree a settlement which must command support throughout both communities.

## Cross Border Bodies

- The role and nature of cross-border bodies is a matter for the Talks' participants to agree as part of the overall settlement and will now be part of the focus of detailed negotiations. If Mr McCartney wishes to influence this element, or any element of the eventual settlement, then he and his party should return to the Talks.