

## STATEMENT FROM THE JOINT UNIONIST LEADERS

The present talks process did not come about by good fortune, but rather along a route started by us over three years ago with the then Secretary of State, Tom King. We make the point, only to establish that we wish the talks to succeed. Moreover, it is clearly the desire of the community that success should greet our efforts. We have been concerned that, thus far, Mr Brooke has been unable to obtain agreement among the parties as to a venue for Strand 2 of the negotiations (dealing with the relationship between any new Northern Ireland administration and the Republic of Ireland).

Our minds have been exercised by the dilemma and while we believe that the overwhelming burden of historical precedence and logistical suitability weighs in favour of meeting in London for Strand 2, we have been willing to consider, and have talked with Mr Brooke about, other options.

With parties maintaining confidentiality there has been limited information available to the public so we feel it is useful to review the situation. The position of the parties on the location when the talks would enter the second strand was well known. The SDLP wanted the talks in the Island of Ireland, at Dublin or Armagh, while Unionists believed that they should be held in London.

As testimony of our reasonable approach we placed before the Secretary of State a sequence of alternatives:-

1. London.
2. Elsewhere in Great Britain.
3. London for Strand 2, with all but the final stages of Strand 3 (which deals with the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland) in Dublin.
4. A neutral venue outside the two islands.
5. The opening meeting of Strand 2 in London; moving to a neutral location for the substantive negotiations; concluding in Dublin with a transitional meeting from Strand 2 to Strand 3 and thereafter alternating between London and Dublin.

This latest proposal, we felt, went even further than the suggestion by Archbishop Cathal Daly and reflected our preparedness to go the extra mile.

We cannot continue upon an imbalanced and continuous process of compromise - to do so would be to capitulate and that we will not do.

While we will continue to seek a reasonable accommodation, the community will understand that we cannot indefinitely be expected to alter our position in the absence of a reciprocal measure of flexibility by others.

Released Friday 10 May 1991.