

TALKS, 9 MARCH 1992 - DRAFT STATEMENT

The first plenary meetings of the first strand of the new political talks took place at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, today. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt hon Peter Brooke MP, chaired the meetings, supported by the Minister of State, Dr Brian Mawhinney MP. The Rt hon James Molyneaux MP, Mr John Hume MP MEP, the Reverend Dr Ian Paisley MP MEP and Dr John Alderdice led delegations from the Ulster Unionist Party, the Social, Democratic and Labour Party, the Ulster Democratic Unionist Party and the Alliance Party respectively.

All the participants warmly welcomed the start of the new talks and looked forward to frank and constructive exchanges in the months ahead. They emphasised their determination to work together within the framework set out in the Secretary of State's statement to the House of Commons on 26 March 1991. They expressed their total condemnation of continuing terrorist violence on both sides of the community. They observed that political violence served no purpose other than to bring misery and suffering to the people of Northern Ireland and called upon the terrorists to end their activities forthwith. They emphasised that the proper way to influence attitudes in a civilised society is through the democratic process.

The parties confirmed that the talks would continue up to the point when the UK general election was called and that they would then resume after a post-election meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

The participants agreed on the need for arrangements to ensure swift and effective progress, [~~and to avoid delay over procedural matters~~]. To this end, a Business Committee was established to plan for the efficient conduct of business at future meetings. The Committee will comprise representatives of each delegation and be chaired by the Minister of State. It was agreed that the Committee would meet ^{more directly} later this week in preparation for the next plenary meeting on [], subject to the general election ^{date} being called in the meantime.