

DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF OPENING PLENARY SESSION -
MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 1996 (12.09)

Those present:

Independent Chairmen	Government Teams	Parties
Mr Holkeri	British Government	Alliance Party
General de Chastelain	Irish Government	Labour
		Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
		Progressive Unionist Party
		Social Democratic and Labour Party
		Ulster Democratic Party
		Ulster Democratic Unionist Party
		United Kingdom Unionist Party
		Ulster Unionist Party

1. The Chairman called the meeting to order at 12.09 and obtained approval for the minutes of the meeting of 8 October, 1996. He said that he had been informed that there was a need to have a short period of time for further valuable bilaterals to take place. Accordingly, he proposed an adjournment subject to the call of the Chair but not earlier than 14.30.

2. The DUP said that the meeting had been dealing with the matter since July and perhaps it was time to apply the provisions of rule 30 of the Rules of Procedure on decision making. The DUP was not aware of the reported progress in bilaterals that was supposed to be taking place. The Chairman said that his proposal was a pragmatic way of proceeding. The DUP wished to know what parties were involved in bilateral meetings, but the Chairman said that this was a confidential matter. The DUP said that it was opposing the adjournment of the meeting.

3. The UKUP said that it would not oppose adjournments generally once they were an aid to progress. It understood that communications between the parties and the Chairman were confidential at the option of the parties involved. But it felt nevertheless that the DUP had a reasonable point in asking who were involved in bilaterals and it believed that confidentiality was not really an issue in that context. The party said it was not unreasonable to request that the information be divulged to a Plenary meeting of the group, particularly in view of comments that had been made about the need for trust and confidence building among the parties. It proposed that the parties who were involved in bilateral discussions should make this fact known, not the nature of the discussions.

4. The British Government said that it was known to the DUP and others that it was engaged in talks with parties about the agenda for the remaining Plenary session. There could be a constructive outcome to these talks if further bilaterals were to take place. The Chairman read from rule 30 in support of his proposal to adjourn the meeting to allow further bilaterals to take place. He believed that the bilaterals could secure agreement on the agenda. The SDLP queried the basis in the Rules of Procedure for opposing a formal proposal of the Chairman. At that point, the DUP said it was withdrawing its opposition as it had been made aware that the British Government was involved in the bilaterals. The meeting adjourned as originally proposed at 12.20.

Independent Chairmen Notetakers
14 October 1996

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