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SUMMARY RECORD OF PLENARY SESSION -
MONDAY 26 JANUARY 1998 (1645) - LANCASTER HOUSE, LONDON

Those present:

| INDEPENDENT CHAIRMEN | GOVERNMENT TEAMS | PARTIES |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Senator Mitchell Mr Holkeri | British Government Irish Government | Alliance Labour Northern Ireland Women's Coalition Progressive Unionist Party Sinn Féin Social Democratic & Labour Party Ulster Unionist Party |

1. The Chairman convened the meeting and said that he would call on the two Governments to deliver their determination on the position of the UDP in the talks. As soon as this was finished he intended to adjourn the plenary subject to the call of the chair. There would be a meeting of strand two at 1000 the following day.

2. The British Government said the two Governments regarded the UFF involvement in sectarian murders, which had been well attested by information in the security forces' possession, to be admitted in their statement. The statement itself asserted that these murders were a 'measured military response' to 'Republican aggression'. If this was the motivation of the perpetrators it was all the clearer that the murders constituted a breach of the first Mitchell principle of democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues. The British Government said it found the UFF's use in this context of terms such as 'military response' outrageous, unsustainable and deeply offensive to the families and friends of their innocent victims.

3. The British Government said both Governments accepted that the Ulster Democratic Party may have sought to use its influence to oppose the violence of the UFF, and took full account of the acknowledgement by other participants of the UDP's efforts. There was, however, no doubt in the Governments' minds that there were close links between the Ulster Freedom Fighters and the UDP, and that the question whether the party has demonstrably dishonoured its commitment to the Mitchell principles had to be considered in the light of that.

4. The British Government said the Governments were obliged to conclude that by reason of the UFF murders, there had been the clearest breach of the UDP's commitment to the Mitchell principles. The UDP was therefore no longer entitled to participate in the negotiations. The UDP had now withdrawn from the talks, which, in view of the course of events, seemed to the Governments an appropriate gesture.

5. The UFF statement indicated that its involvement in killings had for the present come to an end, in that what it termed its military response was now concluded. The statement left room for doubt, however, as to how unequivocal the restored cease-fire was. The ambiguity here had to be resolved.

6. The British Government said that if, over a period of weeks, a complete, unequivocal and unqualified UFF cease-fire were demonstrated, and established through word and deed to have been fully and continuously observed, the Governments would consider the possibility of the UDP rejoining the negotiations. With that possibility in mind they, with their advisors, would keep the situation under the most careful review. The Governments would, of course, do nothing that was incompatible with the integrity of the process, which depended on the total and absolute commitment of all

participants to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues required by the Mitchell principles.

7. The Irish Government said it supported the statement by the British Government. The Government was obliged to conclude, following the recent sectarian murders by the UFF, that the UDP had breached its commitment to the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence. Accordingly, it was the Government's judgment that the UDP were no longer entitled to participate in the multi-party negotiations. The Irish Government noted that the UDP had withdrawn from the talks, which it believed was an appropriate gesture. The Irish Government made clear that, if over a period of weeks, there was a complete and unqualified cease-fire established by word and deed, the two Governments would consider the possibility of the UDP rejoining the negotiations. The Irish Government said it would welcome this in such circumstances. In the meantime, the two Governments would keep the situation under the most careful review.

8. The Irish Government emphasised that the talks process depended on the total and absolute commitment to democratic and peaceful means required by the Mitchell principles. The whole process was dedicated to the idea that a comprehensive political settlement could once and for all eradicate all political violence from Northern Ireland. The Irish Government said it looked forward to resuming work towards such a settlement.

9. The British Government announced details of two seminars. The first, on the subject of Scottish and Welsh devolution, would be addressed by Henry McLeish MP, Minister of State at the Scottish Office, and Wyn Griffiths, Minister of State at the Welsh Office. This seminar would take place in the State Dining Room immediately after the plenary concluded. A second

seminar would take place in the Long Gallery on the subject of rights, and would be addressed by Lord Williams, Minister at the Home Office.

10. The Chairman adjourned the plenary at 1700 to resume at the call of the chair. The meeting of Strand Two would commence at 1000 the next morning.

Independent Chairmen Notetakers
28 January 1998

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