

# Office of the Independent Chairmen

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## MEMBERS

### MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY 1998 AT 1500

CHAIRMAN: General de Chastelain

THOSE PRESENT: British Government  
Irish Government

Alliance  
Labour  
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition  
Progressive Unionist Party  
Sinn Féin  
Social Democratic and Labour Party  
Ulster Democratic Party  
Ulster Unionist Party  
Head of TAU

#### **Item 1 - Visit to London - discussion of number of participants eligible to attend and options for reducing current costs**

The Chairman stated that this was an emergency meeting of the Business Committee called to discuss the above topics. The British Government spoke briefly to its short paper dated 14 January and the Chairman invited comment on it. Following a short discussion, during which some participants also sought to ascertain from the Chairman the broad nature of the London programme, the Committee agreed to recommend that London meetings should begin at 1000 am on Monday 26 January with a Strand Two session. It was also noted that a Strand Three liaison meeting might take place during the period in London. The Committee agreed to recommend that in order to reduce costs, sessions in London should be concluded by 1700 on Wednesday 28 January to enable participants to return that evening, thereby reducing overnight stays from four to three in total. The Committee also agreed to recommend that the maximum number of participants per delegation at a session, and who could avail themselves of the travel and subsistence allowances outlined in the

revised joining constructions would be two or three delegates (depending on the size of party) plus three supporters plus 3 back-up staff. Such a figure was inclusive of those parties which had serving Westminster MP's who would be attending as delegates but not claiming the allowances. It was noted that access to the London venue could only be guaranteed by showing the yellow backed pass relevant to Castle Buildings.

The Committee also agreed to recommend that further cost reductions should be pursued by the British Government using some London-based staff for its support to the talks rather than those on the Belfast side.

The Head of TAU stated that party reservations for hotel accommodation in London could be invoiced directly to TAU if this was felt to be desirable. The Head of TAU also agreed to facilitate parties in ascertaining what amount of accommodation was available in central London from the list of hotels supplied. TAU would also consider reimbursing hotel costs if and when the agreed ceiling of £125 per person (bed and breakfast) was exceeded in certain circumstances.

#### **Item 2 - Date of next meeting**

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be at the call of the Chair.

**Independent Chairmen Notetakers**  
**15 January 1998**

bcmi/01/98