

# Office of the Independent Chairmen

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## MEMBERS

## MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 20 JANUARY 1998 AT 1400

**CHAIRMEN:** General de Chastelain  
Mr Holkeri

**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

The Chairman outlined the reasons for calling a meeting at this time. He also stated that minutes from the previous two Committee meetings (12 and 14 January) were not yet available but would be circulated for approval in due course.

### **Item 1 - Future Scheduling of the Negotiations in the light of Discussions from the Strand One Meeting on 19 January and Strand Two on 20 January**

The Chairman sought comments on this topic. Given that the Strand meetings themselves had pointed to a schedule of business it was agreed any further comments could be incorporated in item 2.

**Item 2 - To Consider the Proposal from Strand One that the two days be allocated to Strand One Business in the week commencing 2 February, perhaps 2 & 3 February**

Following a short discussion the Committee noted that, in scheduling terms, Strand Two meetings would take place in London, at Lancaster House on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 26, 27 and 28 January as arranged. The Committee also noted that a Strand Three Liaison meeting would also occur during that period - probably on Wednesday 28 January. Furthermore the Committee recommended that Strand One meetings be held in Belfast on Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 February. A meeting of the Liaison Sub-committee on Confidence Building Measures was already scheduled for Wednesday 4 February at 1030. The Committee also recommended that one day be set aside for Strand One and Strand Two respectively on Monday 9 and Tuesday 10 February, and that a Business Committee be scheduled for that week. The Chairman stated that he would consult further with the Chairman of Strand Two on actual Strand Two meeting dates in the weeks commencing 2 and 9 February bearing in mind that the week commencing 16 February would see Strand Two meetings being held in Dublin. The Committee also noted that 11 February was NI questions at Westminster.

In relation to the issue of agreeing a mechanism for handling cross strand issues, the Committee agreed to defer this until the Chairman of the Plenary had had an opportunity to consider the matter during the period of business in London. In terms of the administrative arrangements for the London visit and in particular the size of delegations, the Committee confirmed its view, citing Rule 28, that a full representation of participants, as had been agreed at its previous meeting, should attend the London sessions. (This format allowed for either two or three delegates, plus three supporters, plus three back room staff). The Chairman said he would put forward this view to the Chairman of the Plenary since the previous Plenary meeting had agreed a two plus two format for the first of the Strand meetings.

The Irish Government pointed out that there were specific rules of attendance governing Strand Three liaison meetings and it expected these would be adhered to. The Irish Government said it couldn't support a change from what it believed to be the Plenary's decision on 13 January to limit numbers in Strand Two meetings in London to two plus two but it did agree with the Committee's views on the matter being made known to the Chairman of the Plenary.

The British Government provided further details of evening arrangements in London. Members of the Committee noted and supported arrangements being made to organise seminars on Monday 26 February between 1700 - 1900 at which expert speakers would address such as issues as Scottish and Welsh devolution, human rights and the European Union.

**Item 3 - Any Other Business**

None raised.

**Item 4 - Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee agreed that this should be left at the call of the Chair but not later than 1400 on 4 February.

**Independent Chairmen Notetakers  
21 January 1998**

bc/mi.02/98