



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
STORMONT CASTLE  
BELFAST BT4 3ST

Tel. Belfast (0232) 763255

*Permanent Under-Secretary of State*

JOHN A. CHILCOT, CB

Dr John Alderdice  
55 Knock Road  
Belfast  
BT5 6LB

16 April 1991

*Dear Dr Alderdice,*

The Secretary of State, in his letter to you last week, undertook that I would write to you about a range of detailed points about the forthcoming talks. This letter sets out some of the detailed arrangements we envisage; if any of them raise any question for you, I hope you will not hesitate to get in touch with me or with Joe Pilling, the Deputy Under Secretary.

#### Venue

We have looked carefully at where the talks should take place in the light of the views expressed by each of the parties. We have concluded that, for a range of mainly practical reasons, we should use the Conference Room on the 1st Floor in Parliament Buildings, Stormont; indeed there would be real difficulty in finding an alternative location with suitable facilities for the talks and for each of the Party delegations. Accordingly, we have put plans in hand to provide a small suite of offices in this building for each delegation, consisting of an office for the Leader, a separate but adjacent room for other delegates and another adjacent office for secretarial and other support staff. All these suites would be on the ground floor, but with easy access to the Conference Room on the floor above.

#### Seating and the Number of Delegates

We propose to use a round table for the talks, which all those I have consulted agree would be conducive to workmanlike proceedings. Given the nature of the accommodation and taking full account of the views expressed by each Party, and having now tested by practical experiment the maximum number of delegates who can be seated around the table, we propose that each Party should be able to field up to 7 representatives in the Conference Room at any one time; and there will be places for three of them at the table itself. In addition to any typing or other administrative support staff, each Party should be entitled to accredit up to 10 people who would have access to the Party suite in Parliament Buildings, and to the Conference Room, on the basis that (given there is only room for 7 at any one time) it would be for delegations to choose those who would represent that party in any particular session.



### Agenda

We have envisaged that the agenda would be settled in the initial round of bilateral discussions. I understand that you had a word over the weekend with the Minister of State about preparing for the bilateral discussion. It would help me considerably in briefing the Secretary of State for the due despatch of business in the bilaterals, if it were possible to have some idea, on an informal and confidential basis of those matters which you would wish to have discussed. If it were possible to have any indication of that by Friday 26 April in advance of the proposed bilateral on Tuesday 30 April, that would be particularly helpful.

### Finance

As to finance, we propose to follow the normal practice and make available, as a facility, arrangements whereby delegations should be able to claim travel and subsistence expenses. Also, given the loss of remuneration which could be suffered over quite a long period, and again following the normal practice, which is to recognise this, delegates will also be able to claim an allowance on days when talks take place. These arrangements will be available throughout the talks process. It would be up to each delegate who wished to do so to submit claims on a regular, perhaps weekly, basis to the Talks Administrator, Mr Townson (0232-763210 Ext:2485). A detailed note setting out the conditions and rates is being prepared and will be circulated shortly.

### Office Equipment

In order to ensure that the appropriate equipment is available in your Party suite, it would be helpful if the relevant member of your staff would make contact with the Talks Administrator to make the appropriate arrangements. We plan to have the accommodation, with the necessary furniture and equipment, available by about the middle of the week beginning 22 April. We will of course need to make suitable arrangements during that week with each delegation for the issue of photo-passes for the talks. Once again, perhaps my staff and yours can liaise on mutually convenient arrangements.

### Research Facilities

The Library in Parliament Buildings will be available to your research staff from now on - though there may be a need for some restriction on the limited holdings of relevant books actually being lent out. Once more, if you wish to make use of this facility perhaps you or your staff could contact the Talks Administrator so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Yours sincerely  
John Lewis