



Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
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Dr John Alderdice
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3 May 1991

Dear John,

1. Having now had an initial round of bilateral meetings with representatives of the four political parties involved in the current round of Talks, I hope that the first plenary session of the inter-party talks may begin on Tuesday 7 May. However, I do not think we should start plenary meetings before we have a much clearer understanding regarding the venue for the second strand than we have now. On that, I believe I may need further bilateral discussions with each of you. Accordingly, I hope you could all be present in your delegation rooms at Parliament Buildings at 10.30 am on Tuesday, so that if it remains necessary I can discuss the matter separately with each party. If we make progress I hope our plenary discussions can start later that day, or at least on Wednesday or Thursday.

2. As to the agenda and procedure during plenary sessions, I have been reflecting on the points made during this week's bilateral meetings. There is general agreement that before long during the first strand of the Talks it will be necessary to discuss (without commitment) a wide range of practical points. Equally it seems to be the general view that it would be wrong to address these practical points without first identifying the positions of the various parties on the underlying issues or general principles and exploring the extent of any common ground at that level.

3. I therefore propose that after an initial opening statement by me the parties should be invited in turn to set out their approach to the various relationships mentioned in my statement of 26 March.



These presentations would not be time-limited though I am sure each party will keep in mind the need to be brisk. I envisage that after each presentation there would be an opportunity for myself and the other delegates to ask questions of a clarificatory nature, without entering into substantive exchanges.

4. The presentations would provide a firm basis for seeking to draw together any common themes which had emerged and to identify those points on which it was agreed that further discussion would be necessary.

5. On this basis the agenda for the initial plenary sessions will be:

- i. opening statement by the Secretary of State
- ii. presentation by the Alliance Party
- iii. presentation by the SDLP
- iv. presentation by the UDUP
- v. presentation by the UUP
- vi. identification of common themes and issues for further discussion, introduced by the Secretary of State
- vii. work plan for the next phase of the plenary sessions.

6. During the bilateral meetings I undertook to send each party an aide memoire of the various practical points which, in the light of our bilateral exchanges, the Government would expect to see discussed (without commitment) once the plenary sessions have progressed to the point at which it becomes appropriate for the parties to table specific proposals. A copy of this is now attached.

7. I am writing in similar terms to the leaders of the other parties concerned.

Sincerely
Pin Brooke

PB

IN CONFIDENCE



AIDE MEMOIRE

While it may well be helpful to identify the underlying issues or general principles, the Government would expect the following specific points to be addressed during the first strand of the Talks, though not necessarily in this order:

- extent of powers to be transferred (executive or legislative or both?);
- extent of responsibilities (matters to be devolved?);
- means of exercising executive responsibilities (committee system, executive, other?);
- role of UK Government in respect of matters which are not transferred;
- nature and extent of the roles of representatives of the two parts of the community, and possible safeguards for any or all sides of the community;
- arrangements for the protection of individual and community rights;
- legislative arrangements (procedures in Northern Ireland, procedures at Westminster?);
- type of institution;
- security matters (extent of local political influence over law and order matters);
- financial arrangements and resources;
- relationship with the Secretary of State and UK Government system;
- relationship with other bodies (District Councils, Boards, etc);
- EC matters; and
- the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.

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