



Northern Ireland Office
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Dr John Alderdice
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Dear John:

When we met we discussed the arrangements for resuming the talks launched at Parliament Buildings on 9 March.

There will be a meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on Monday 27 April and I am confident that it will announce arrangements regarding a fresh interval in Conference meetings which will be generally acceptable. I will ensure that the terms of the announcement are conveyed to you as early as possible on Monday afternoon.

Against that background I am writing to invite you and your delegations to resume the talks, at Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday 29 April. My officials will be in touch with your parties on various practical points.

Meanwhile, I thought it would be helpful - especially as I know we are all anxious to put the time available to good use - to indicate how I believe we might proceed over the next two weeks, given the other commitments which arise, especially at Westminster. Subject to your views and those of the other party leaders, I should like to start the resumed talks at 10.30am on 29 April with a meeting of the four party leaders in my office at Parliament Building. The aim would be to seek agreement on the day's business and on our general approach to the talks.

I would then chair a plenary session, starting at 11.30, and begin - after a few opening remarks - by inviting Jeremy Hanley to report the conclusions of the Business Committee which met on 9 March.



That report should lead us into a discussion of:

- (a) our timetable for the rest of this week, and next week. Against the background of the Business Committee recommendation that we should in principle, as before, meet on the first three days of each week, my own hope is that we could agree to meet on 4 and 5 May, accepting that Parliamentary Business would take precedence on 6 May;
- (b) the setting up, once we have established, in plenary, some broad principles around which any specific proposals for new political institutions should be constructed, of a small number of sub-Committees;
- (c) the agenda for the first plenary sessions of the resumed talks. I understand that the Business Committee has recommended a discussion of a revised version of the Government Team's paper "Realities and Common Themes", a copy of which is attached, and I suggest we aim to get on with that during the afternoon of 29 April.

The agenda for future plenary sessions might be considered by the Business Committee at a meeting on 29, or perhaps 30, April but it may be helpful for you to know that the Government has prepared a further paper which should provide the focus for a constructive discussion of the broad principles which should underly any new political institutions in Northern Ireland and which, subject to the Business Committee's views, might be tabled for consideration once discussion of the "Realities and Common Themes" paper has been completed. Without wanting to pre-empt your own views, I believe that a discussion of this further paper would enable us to identify those issues on which we shall need further discussion; and may also



assist us, with the help of the Business Committee, to identify specific points which could be remitted for consideration by sub-Committees.

I hope it has been helpful to give you this preliminary indication of my thinking. I look forward to seeing you at 10.30 on 29 April.

Yours sincerely
P. J. S.
