

REVISED

REF: PT/25

SUMMARY RECORD OF A PLENARY MEETING HELD IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS ON
THE AFTERNOON OF 1 JULY 1992

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Dr Paisley
Mr Hanley	Mr Close	Mr Robinson
PUS	Mr Morrow	Mr Vitty
Mr Fell		
	Mr Dickson	Mr Dodds
Mr Thomas	Mrs Bell	Mr Campbell
Mr Maccabe	Dr McGarry	Mr Wilson
Mr D J R Hill	Mr Jones	Mr Gibson
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Mr Brooker	Mr Hume	Mr Molyneaux
Mr Smith	Dr Hendron	Mr Nicholson
	Mr Haughey	Mr Empey
<u>Also Present</u>	Mr Farren	Mr Maginnis
	Mr Feeley	Mr Allen
Mr Fittall	Mr Gallagher	Mr Donaldson
Mr Smyth	Mr Maginness	Mrs Bradford
Mrs Pyper		
Mr Beeton		

The meeting began at 3.52pm and concluded at 4.03pm.

2. The Secretary of State welcomed the party delegations and thanked them for their patience in waiting for the Plenary to start. He then read a statement, the text of which is attached. He went on to propose that the Business Committee should meet immediately to consider the text of a draft press release and that the Plenary should then re-convene to approve the draft and endorse the note of this Plenary meeting.

3. This was agreed by all party delegations without comment.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

SECRETARY OF STATE'S STATEMENT TO PLENARY, 1 JULY 1992

1. When we last met around this table, on 12 June, I was able to make a statement which described the widespread agreement which existed on what the next steps in the talks process should be.

There were three elements;

- first, that the Strand 1 Sub-Committee should be invited to continue its work, concentrating in particular on the points listed in paragraph 8 of the Sub-Committee report of 10 June. A supplementary report was duly produced by the evening of 16 June for which I believe the Sub-Committee deserves our thanks. I trust we can now formally take note of it.
- Second, that Sir Ninian Stephen should be invited to convene a meeting the following week to which he would invite representatives of the two Governments and of the four Northern Ireland political parties participating in the talks to discuss a possible agenda for Strand 2 of the talks. That meeting was duly held on 19 June and completed consideration of a possible agenda for Strand 2. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Sir Ninian for the way in which he chaired that meeting, and the possible agenda which it produced - while it has yet to be ratified - has helped to illustrate the pattern of discussion which might be expected in Strand 2.
- Third, that the two Governments should hold a meeting in Strand 3 formation which observers from each of the parties would be invited to attend for at least part of the time, to give preliminary consideration to the issues likely to arise in that strand. That meeting took place yesterday. The two Governments give preliminary consideration to the issues, took careful note of the views of each of the parties and agreed a framework for substantive discussion in Strand 3, including an agenda.

2. We have agreed a number of Common Themes and a set of Common Principles which all agree should be the criteria against which any proposed arrangements should be judged. We also agreed a number of statements relevant to the need to protect, respect and express the identities of those from each of the main traditions within the community in Northern Ireland. A certain measure of agreement on new political institutions was recorded in the Sub-Committee report of 13 May. A number of other important principles were acknowledged in the further Sub-Committee report noted by plenary on 1 June. The Possible Outline Framework for new political institutions in Northern Ireland which was first considered by plenary on 3 June indicated a wider and higher level of provisional and conditional agreement. The Sub-Committee report of 10 June further expanded the amount of common ground, clearly identified the areas of disagreement and reached a measure of agreement on a range of other matters, especially the future relationship between any new political institutions in Northern Ireland and the Westminster Parliament. That was supplemented, as I have mentioned, by the further Sub-Committee report of 16 June.

3. It is clear we are not collectively able to move towards a greater degree of consensus on new political institutions for Northern Ireland at this stage. It is, however, my judgement that developments in the other strands of the talks would enable one party or another to shift its position and enable further progress towards full agreement on arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland.

4. Against that background, it may be helpful if I say something about the attitude of Her Majesty's Government to the Strand I sub-Committee report, consistently with what the Permanent Secretary, Mr Chilcot, said during the meeting to discuss a possible agenda for Strand II, on 19 June.

5. HMG, for its part, would be willing to facilitate the implementation of the institutional arrangements outlined in the sub-Committee report of 10 June, including those aspects not at present universally agreed, if, but only if, they came in the light of further exchanges in the Talks, whether in Strand I or in other strands, to attract the support of all four parties.

I N C O N F I D E N C E

6. As to the basis for entering Strand II, I can say on behalf of the Government that unless and until the four parties agree on a different approach, we take the view that discussions in Strand II are likely to take place on the premise that any new political institutions in Northern Ireland would be based on the structures outlined in the sub-Committee report. The Government is ready to enter and participate in discussions in Strand II on that basis, not having at this stage a basis in any of the proposals in the form originally submitted by any of the parties in Strand I because none of those can be regarded as having sufficient general support.

7. There is one particular point of concern to some around this table, on which I should speak. I do not wish to go further than saying that I believe it is in everyone's interest that the Talks process as a whole should achieve an unambiguous consensus on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and produce a framework for relationships which will be genuinely acceptable to all the Talks participants and to the people. That may have implications for Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. That there are now different views on whether a consensus is to be found is both undeniable and unsurprising; it is why we need to talk. But I do not believe such a consensus to be beyond our grasp, and I shall argue for it.

8. I have now reflected on the position which has been reached in the Talks and on the points made to me by the party leaders [and other delegates]. My conclusion is that there is no more work that can usefully be done in Strand I at present, though in due course there certainly will be, and that the most constructive route forward is to build on the work done in the preparatory meetings for Strands II and III and to move forward now into those strands of discussion. I therefore now formally propose that the later strands of discussion should be launched. I do so with the agreement of each of the party leaders.

9. I will communicate the fact that I have made this proposal to the Irish Government and to Sir Ninian Stephen whose responsibility it now is to convene the opening meeting in Strand II.