

F001/Rev3

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation
Procedures of the Forum
Chairperson's Note

Co-ordinating Committee

1. There is broad agreement that the terms of reference of the Co-ordinating Committee should be "to assist the Plenary Forum in the efficient and effective discharge of its role and functions". The Co-ordinating Committee will be subordinate to, take its instructions from, and report to the Plenary Forum. As agreed, it will be chaired by the Forum Chairperson.
2. In practice, the Chair envisages the Co-ordinating Committee being responsible for drawing up the agendas for meetings of the Forum, facilitating the drawing up and implementation of the Forum's Programme of Work and other matters relating to the smooth running of the body. To further enhance the latter, it is suggested that, unless otherwise decided in particular cases, Delegation Secretaries should also attend meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee.

Sub-committees

3. The Forum may establish Sub-committees to examine specific issues where it feels that such a course would facilitate its work. The decision on the establishment of specific Sub-committees will be taken on a case-by-case basis. The Delegation composition of Sub-committees will be settled by the Forum on a basis to be agreed. (This is an issue which could be examined in the first instance by the Co-ordinating Committee.) In practice, smaller Delegations may have difficulty participating in every Sub-committee.
4. The Chairpersons of the Sub-committees will be chosen by the Forum on a basis to be agreed. (This too is an issue which could be examined in the first instance in the Co-ordinating Committee.)

Regulation of Debates

5. The Chairperson proposes the following arrangements for the consideration of the Forum in respect of debates of the Plenary formation:
 - All interventions will be through the Chair;
 - Opening interventions by Delegations wishing to speak in a debate will follow the order of the Inaugural Meeting of the Forum on 28 October 1994 (there is, of course, no obligation on Delegations to speak in the opening round of a debate);
 - While the foregoing describes the general manner in which opening interventions in a debate will be structured, speakers, if requested, may give way to other Forum Members where a point of clarification or information is sought;

- After the opening round of interventions, Members may intervene - through the Chair - without reference to the order of the Inaugural Meeting. In allowing interventions, however, the Chair will have regard to equity of treatment as between Delegations (eg. where a number of Members simultaneously indicate a wish to speak, priority will be given to Delegations/Members who have not yet contributed, or done so less frequently);
- In regulating interventions, the Chair will endeavour to ensure equity of treatment between Members as well as between Delegations (in practice, this will mean that larger Delegations will tend to receive more speaking time, but with the breakdown between Forum Members approximating parity);
- To allow for the fullest exchange between the membership, the Chair would ask Members to seek to ensure that interventions are succinct and to the point;
- While the Chairperson will endeavour to resolve all matters relating to the regulation of debates by consensus, her ruling will be final.

Record of Debates

6. A verbatim record will be kept of all public Plenary sessions of the Forum. These will be published on an ongoing basis. Private Plenary sessions will be taped - unless in particular cases the Forum decides otherwise - but it is not proposed to make a transcript of such tapes. However, should a Member request a transcript of a particular part of a private Plenary debate, this can be provided.
7. In respect of public and private Plenary sessions of the Forum, the Secretariat will prepare a note of agreed action or decision points.

Tabling of Papers

8. It is requested that papers being tabled by Members be given in the first instance to the Secretariat, who will arrange for distribution to Delegations.

Irish Interpretation

9. An Irish language simultaneous interpretation service will be available for all Plenary sessions of the Forum.

Public or Private Session/ Public Submissions

10. It will be for decision by the Forum itself, on a case by case basis, whether Plenary sessions, or parts thereof, should be held in public or private. The view of the Chair is that a balance needs to be found between facilitating confidence and trust between the Members and ensuring a process that is as open and transparent as possible. To facilitate the widest possible access to the work of the Forum, and to enable it to hear from the broadest possible range of views, it has been agreed that submissions will be invited from the public and other bodies and individuals, as the Forum deems necessary. Submissions from the public will in the first instance be in writing, but it will be open to the Forum to invite a number of those submitting papers to make oral presentations.

It will be for decision by the Forum itself as to how the process of submissions/presentations is regulated. It seems to the Chair that a crucial requirement in this regard will be a balance as between the two major traditions and others.

Substitute Members

11. In supplement to the Taoiseach's letter and enclosures of 21 October 1994 inviting participation in the Forum, it has been agreed that Delegations can draw from a panel of up to three Substitutes, who can fill seats vacated by Alternate Members. This arrangement is subject to the understanding that at no point would the total Delegation size at a particular meeting exceed the designated number of Full/Alternate Seats. Moreover, a Substitute can replace an Alternate Member only; only Alternates can substitute for Full Members.

Deputy Chairpersons

12. At the suggestion of the Chairperson, it has been agreed that in the event of her unavoidable absence, the Forum will be chaired successively by nominees of the Delegations in line with their place in the agreed speaking order.

Review of Procedures

13. It has been agreed that the procedures of the Forum, as outlined in this note, will be reviewed after a number of weeks. It is envisaged that this review will take place early in the New Year.

Judge Catherine McGuinness SC
Chairperson
14 November 1994