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ALDZ/2/6/10/1/248

Roinn an Taoiseach
Department of the Taoiseach

FAX MESSAGE TO Dr. John Alderdice

Date: 23 April 1996

Pages (including cover): 3

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Message: Taoiseach's reply to Parliamentary Questions today herewith.

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QUESTION NOS: 2 & 3

DÁIL QUESTIONS addressed to the Taoiseach
by Deputies Bertie Ahern and Mary Harney
for **ORAL ANSWER** on Tuesday, 23rd April, 1996.

QUESTION NO: 2

To ask the Taoiseach the future role he envisages for the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation.

- Bertie Ahern.

QUESTION NO: 3

To ask the Taoiseach the composition of the Government's negotiating team for the forthcoming all-party negotiations commencing on 10 June, 1996.

- Mary Harney.

REPLY

I propose to take Questions 2 and 3 together.

A decision on the composition of the Government's delegation for the all-party negotiations commencing on 10 June will be taken in due course.

The Government are satisfied that these negotiations provide an unrivalled opportunity for an historical political compromise. This opportunity is provided by the comprehensive and balanced ground rules for the talks which this Government agreed with the British Government. All the key principles to ensure a successful outcome are in place and overall, the ground rules paper is a significant advance on

ALD2/2/6/10/1/250

the basis for the 1991-92 talks. Never before did any Government get a fixed date, for fully inclusive all-party negotiations on such a comprehensive basis.

Regarding the future role of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, this is a matter for the participants to determine by agreement. The Forum remains in being. But its Chairperson has concluded, in line with the preponderant view amongst the 12 participating delegations, that its meetings should be deferred. This decision was consistent with the basis on which the Forum was set up, namely the existence of an IRA ceasefire, and its terms of reference which specify that all differences be resolved by exclusively peaceful and democratic means.

The Chairperson, in her consultations with delegations, also noted a strong wish, amongst all those participating, to see those conditions restored. I share this wish and hope. While the primary axis of progress is now the all-party talks commencing on 10 June, the Government remain open to any role for the Forum that might seem appropriate in the light of the evolving situation.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding contribution to the peace process made by Judge Catherine McGuinness through her skillful and inclusive chairing of the Forum.

ENDS