



Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

27 November, 1997

Ms Monica McWilliams  
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

**Reconvening of Forum for Peace and Reconciliation**

Dear Ms McWilliams,

You are, I believe, aware that it is proposed to reconvene the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin. I understand that soundings made with your Coalition at Castle Buildings indicated that you would be positively disposed to accepting an invitation to participate in the Forum. Accordingly, I now have pleasure in inviting the Coalition to participate henceforth and to be represented at a first meeting of the reconvened Forum in the Conference Centre, Dublin Castle at 10.30 am on Friday, 5 December, to continue until 1 pm and to be followed by lunch.

You may wish to know that I am extending a similar invitation to the Labour group represented in the multi-party talks. Following the sad loss of Senator Gordon Wilson, I am also inviting Senator Maurice Hayes to take up the individual seat in the Forum which the late Senator Wilson filled with such distinction. Soundings were also taken with representatives of the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party. Both indicated that they would place the question before their Party executives but it was subsequently confirmed that they would not envisage taking up membership of the Forum in Dublin. It is clear that this is also the position of other unionist parties.

I am conscious that a meeting on Friday coincides with meetings of the Forum in Belfast. However, I understand that advance soundings were taken with parties participating in the latter Forum and that those consulted, including your own Coalition and the Alliance Party, indicated to the Forum Secretary-General



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that they saw no objection to meetings of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation on Friday and that they could make the necessary dispositions. If there is any change in this position, we can consider how best to react.

By reference to the scale of representation that has applied in the Forum, your Coalition would be entitled to have one Member and one Alternate Member and I wish to offer you membership on this basis, which I have communicated to the other delegations participating. A similar basis applies to the Labour group in Northern Ireland. I would be glad if you could confirm your Coalition's agreement to this and if you could notify the Secretary-General of the Forum, Mr Walter Kirwan (Tel Nos 6624 888 or 6194093, fax 6621 972) of your Coalition's nominations.

Alternate members have the right to attend all sessions of the Forum. They have the right to speak, however, only when replacing full members; otherwise their rights are the same as for full members. At Forum meetings, members sit in the front row at desks arranged in a hollow rectangle formation, with alternate members seated on chairs behind. I am including among the enclosures copies of the previous layout and of the layout we would now propose and to which I hope the Coalition can agree. There is also an arrangement whereby each delegation may nominate up to 5 substitute members. Substitutes can attend meetings in place of Members or Alternate Members. As regards financial allowances, these are payable, in respect of any meeting day, only for the sum of a delegation's allotment of Members and Alternate Members - in the Coalition's case, two persons - except where meetings of any sub-committees call for additional representatives to be present.

I am enclosing:

- (1) the terms of reference of the Forum
  
- (2) a note of the representation of the various delegations, existing and now invited



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- (3) a background note on the Forum, drawn up in November, 1995
- (4) a note of the position in regard to expenses, allowances for attendance etc. that applied previously in the Forum and that it is now proposed to continue.

It has been generally accepted by the participating delegations that, for a first meeting of the reconvened Forum, it is appropriate that the main item for discussion would, as I indicated in the Dáil on 18 November, be a general review of the political situation and of political developments in regard to Northern Ireland.

Accordingly, I have proposed to the Chairperson, Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness that the main item for the agenda of the public session on 5 December might be statements from delegations on "Northern Ireland: Political Situation and Developments" and that, in line with what I said in the Dáil on 18 November, following those statements, time might be allowed for delegations not participating in the multi-party talks in Belfast to put questions to delegations that are participating, in a framework that would ensure equitable treatment of all delegations. It will be for the Secretary-General to issue the agenda, including indications as to format and any time-limits on speakers, on the direction of the Chairperson.

I envisage that the Forum will convene essentially on the same basis as before its meetings were suspended. The Chairperson and Secretary-General will be as before and the same membership, procedural, financial, media and seating arrangements will apply, subject to the necessary adjustments to accommodate the new delegations.

The Government consider, however, that in relation to Northern Ireland, the multi-party negotiations must remain the primary arena and focus. We also recognise the very considerable demands that these negotiations place on all those participating in them. Against that background, it is envisaged that meetings of the Forum should be convened only at occasional intervals, say



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every two or three months. For that reason, it is not intended to re-establish a secretariat exclusively devoted to servicing the Forum. The Secretary-General will, however, remain at the disposal of the Chairperson, Delegation Co-ordinators and Secretaries and Members to co-ordinate arrangements to the extent necessary. Adequate Secretariat arrangements will be made on an ad hoc basis for the meeting on 5 December and for other meetings as necessary.

It is not intended that delegations will be, as previously, allocated offices in Dublin Castle on a continuing basis but it is intended on 5 December and otherwise, as necessary, to arrange for telephones to be available for use by Forum members, as well as some rooms in which bilateral meetings could be held, if desired, in the wings of or following the Forum meeting. It is not intended to continue arrangements that previously operated whereby allowances were paid to delegations to cover secretarial and research expenses.

I apologise for the length of this letter and enclosures but I was anxious to respond to any questions you might have about the Forum and its meeting on 5 December. If, however, the Coalition has any other queries, I would suggest that you contact the Secretary-General by 'phone or by fax at the numbers given above.

I very much hope that the Coalition will be able to accept my invitation and I look forward to working with you in the Forum, as in the multi-party talks, towards the same objective of a fair, balanced and durable settlement in regard to Northern Ireland, a settlement that will pave the way for a peaceful and prosperous future for all the people of this island and of these islands.

Yours sincerely

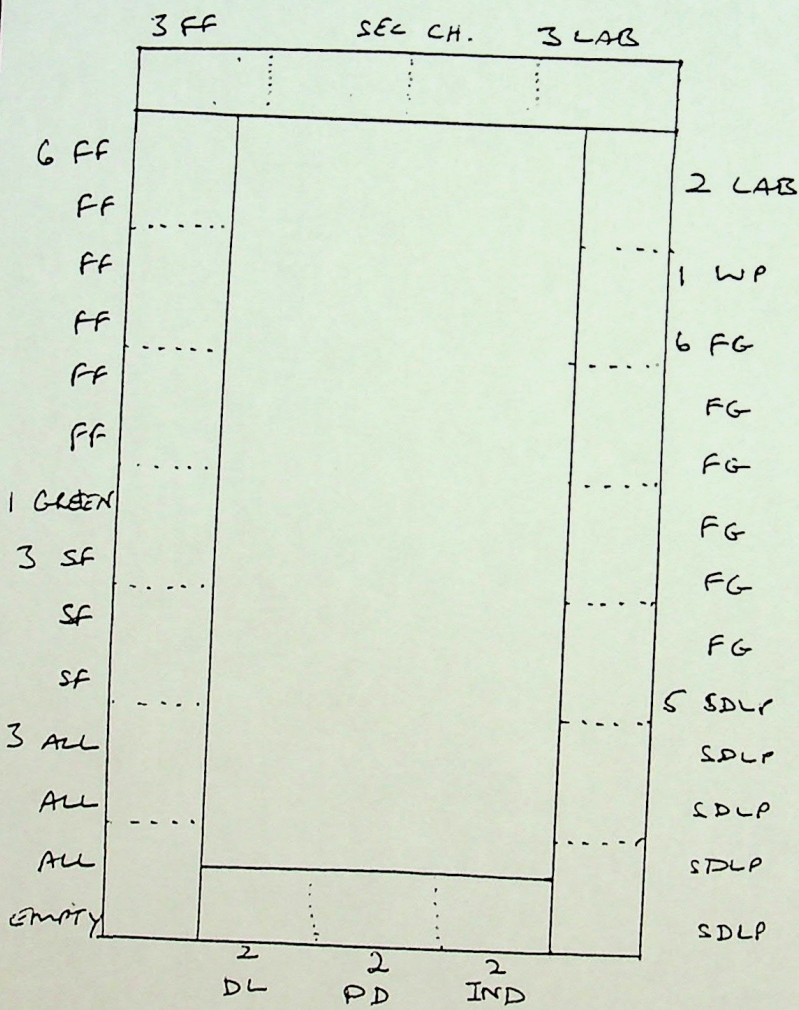
Bertie Ahern  
Taoiseach

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

Composition/Level of Representation

<u>Party</u>	<u>Full Members</u>	<u>Alternate Members</u>
Fianna Fáil	9	4
Fine Gael	6	3
Labour	5	2
Progressive Democrats	2	2
Democratic Left	2	1
Green Party	1	1
SDLP	5	5
Sinn Féin	3	2
Alliance	3	2
Independents (Dáil)	1	1
Independents (Seanad)	1	1
Labour (Northern Ireland)	1	1
NIWC	1	1
Workers Party	1	-
Senator Maurice Hayes	1	-
Total	----- 42 =====	----- 26 =====

# OLD LAYOUT.



NEW LAYOUT

FF FF 3 FIANNA FAÏL SECRETARY GENERAL CHAIRPERSON 3 LABOUR PARTY LABOUR LABOUR

FIANNA FAÏL = 4

GREEN PARTY = 1

SINN FÉIN = 2

ALLIANCE = 2

INDEPENDENT SENATORS = 1  
N.I.W.C. = 1

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

6 FIANNA FAÏL

FF

FF

FF

FF

FF

1 GREEN PARTY

3 SINN FÉIN

SF

SF

3 ALLIANCE

ALL

ALL

SENATOR MAURICE HAYES

INDEPENDENT SENATORS

N.I.W.C.

2 LABOUR PARTY

LABOUR

1 WORKERS PARTY

6 FINE GAEL

FG

FG

FG

FG

FG

5 SDLP

SDLP

SDLP

SDLP

SDLP

INDEPENDENT DEPUTIES

LABOUR (N.I.)

LABOUR PARTY = 2

WORKERS PARTY = 0

FINE GAEL = 3

SDLP = 5

INDEPENDENT DEPUTIES = 1

LABOUR (N.I.) = 1

2 DEMOCRATIC LEFT 2 OBSERVERS B. I.I. P.B. 2 PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

DL=1

P.D.S.=2



## *FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION*

### *TERMS OF REFERENCE*

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The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is being established by the Government in accordance with their intentions as expressed in the Joint Declaration, for as long as is necessary, to consult on and examine ways in which lasting peace, stability and reconciliation can be established by agreement among all the people of Ireland, and on the steps required to remove barriers of distrust, on the basis of promoting respect for the equal rights and validity of both traditions and identities. It will also explore ways in which new approaches can be developed to serve economic interests common to both parts of Ireland, including in the framework of European Union. It will be a fundamental guiding principle of the Forum and of participation in it that all differences relating to the exercise of the right of self-determination of the people of Ireland, and to all other matters, will be resolved exclusively by peaceful and democratic means. The purpose of the Forum will be to provide, as far as possible, an opportunity to both major traditions as well as to others, to assist in identifying and clarifying issues which could most contribute to creating a new era of trust and co-operation on the island. Participation in the Forum will be entirely without prejudice to the position on constitutional issues held by any party.



FORUM FOR PEACE  
AND RECONCILIATION



FÓRAM UM SHÍOCHÁIN  
AGUS ÁTHMHUINTEARAS

*Forum for Peace and Reconciliation*

*Background Note*

Origins

1. The establishment of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation was prefigured in the Joint Declaration issued on 15 December 1993 by the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister; the Declaration indicated that, as part of the development of a process of political dialogue, the Irish Government "would make their own arrangements within their jurisdiction to enable democratic parties to consult together and share in dialogue about the political future " (paragraph 11).
2. In his speech to the Dail on 31 August 1994, in response to the IRA's announcement of its cessation of violence, the then Taoiseach indicated the Government's intention to proceed with the establishment of the Forum. He said it would be open to all democratically-mandated parties on the island of Ireland which were committed to peaceful and democratic means. He and the Tanaiste initiated consultations with all interested political parties on the Forum's membership and Terms of Reference. Invitations to participate were sent to all of the Unionist parties (including, after the loyalist ceasefire, the Progressive Unionist and Ulster Democratic parties) but have not been taken up.
3. Following this process of consultation, the Government issued formal invitations to party leaders on the basis of the attached Terms of Reference. The Inaugural Meeting was held in Dublin Castle on 28 October 1994. The Forum comprises 39 members drawn from 12 parties/groups. The allocation of seats is proportionate to party size. The following parties/groups are represented (with the number of seats in brackets): Fianna Fail (9), Fine Gael (6), Labour (5), Social Democratic and Labour Party (5), Sinn Fein (3), Alliance (3), Progressive Democrats (2), Democratic Left (2), Green Party/Comhaontas Glas (1), Independent Deputies and Senators (1 each), Workers' Party (1). Until his lamented death in June 1995, the late Senator Gordon Wilson was a member in a personal capacity. There is also provision for "alternate" membership (additional representatives from each party who can substitute for members in their absence). Judge Catherine McGuinness, SC, was appointed chairperson.

4. Provision was made for the invitation of observers from democratically-mandated bodies. Messrs. Piet Dankert (former Foreign Minister of the Netherlands) and Leo Tindemans (former Prime Minister of Belgium), the nominees of the European Parliament, have both attended two sessions. The British-Irish Interparliamentary Body have also accepted an invitation in an observer capacity and have been represented on a number of occasions - including by the Co-Chairmen, Mr Paul Bradford (Irish side) and the Conservative MP, Mr Peter Temple-Morris (British side).
5. The Forum's Terms of Reference (attached) indicate that it has a consultative, non-executive role and that it has been established "for as long as is necessary, to consult on and examine ways in which lasting peace, stability and reconciliation can be established by agreement among all the people of Ireland".

## Work of the Forum

6. The Forum, which holds its proceedings in Dublin Castle, has to date met 38 times in plenary session, as a rule for one day each week. Most sessions are held in public. A Co-ordinating Committee has also been established to regulate the business of the Forum and has met 23 times.
7. The Forum has adopted a programme of work under which it has conducted a general debate on "The Nature of the Problem and the Principles Underlying its Resolution", on the basis initially of presentations by each delegation, and has undertaken work on the following ten sub-themes:
  - (1) The Social and Economic Consequences of Peace and Economic Reconstruction.
  - (2) Parity of Esteem.
  - (3) North-South Co-operation.
  - (4) Policing.
  - (5) Justice Issues.
  - (6) Promotion of Reconciliation and Mutual Understanding.
  - (7) Obstacles in the South to Reconciliation.
  - (8) Security Matters.
  - (9) Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.
  - (10) Constitutional Issues and Political Structures.

8. These sub-themes are being addressed in a variety of ways, including debate in the Forum itself, through sub-committees, and, where relevant, the commissioning of academic or consultants' studies. To date, studies have been commissioned on "The Social and Economic Consequences of Peace", Economic Perspectives for a True Ireland Economy, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, Communal Rights in Divided Societies (Best International Practice) and on "Obstacles in the South to Reconciliation". The latter will include a demographic and historical analysis of the position of Protestants in the South. A special Drafting Committee has been established with the aim of securing agreement of the Realities which underlie the basic problem and the Principles which should underpin a lasting political accommodation.
9. The Forum has also solicited submissions from the public, and has to date received some four hundred and fifteen. It was decided that a number of those who had made written submissions would be called to make oral presentations to the Forum. Over eighty groups have been represented to date on the panels making presentations or involved in public hearings, and further sessions are planned for the coming months.
10. Major public hearings on the economic consequences of peace and on social reconstruction were held on 16 December and 20 January respectively. The latter hearings included sessions on victims of violence and on the resettlement of former prisoners. There have also been public hearings on civil liberties issues, on youth and children's issues and on co-operation in the agricultural and tourism sectors. Among the bodies to have addressed the Forum are several whose membership is drawn mainly from the Unionist community in Northern Ireland; these included the Confederation of British Industries Northern Ireland, Ulster Farmers' Union, the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church. A presentation by the Roman Catholic Church is planned in the coming months.
11. Other distinguished visitors who have addressed the Forum include Mr Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, Senator George Mitchell, former US Senate Majority Leader and currently President Clinton's Special Advisor for Economic Initiatives on Ireland, Senator Patrick Leahy, a leading members of the US Senate, the US Ambassador to Ireland, Mrs Jean Kennedy Smith, Mr Oscar Arias, former President of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize Winner and the Deputy President of South Africa, Mr F. W. De Klerk.
12. While the parties participating in the Forum represent a considerable proportion of the people, North and South, the absence of the main Unionist parties constitutes a significant gap and loss. Nonetheless, the Forum has made extensive efforts, through a variety of channels, to facilitate some engagement with unionism. Some progress has been made in this regard. In addition to the presentations by the various Protestant Churches mentioned above, there has been attendance at the Forum of an observer articulating the perspective of Loyalist prisoners, a well received presentation by a prominent Unionist (Roy Garland) in a personal capacity, a presentation by Mr Glen Barr, a leading figure in the Loyalist community as well as Dr Norman Porter, of the

Ulster Unionist Council. The Chairperson and the Secretariat have made a conscious effort to promote accessibility and also coverage in the Northern media. Coverage while less extensive than in the South has been good. The decision to hold Forum sessions in public has helped to ensure transparency and to promote confidence in the work of the Forum in general.

## Conclusion

13. At a time of unprecedented opportunity to overcome the legacies of a conflict with deep historical roots and to establish a fair and honourable accommodation acceptable to all the people of Ireland, North and South, it is essential that there be places of dialogue where the many issues at stake can be explored and where progress can be made towards overcoming mutual mistrust and misunderstanding. The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is one such place, offering a location and a setting where, on both a structured basis and more informally, a sustained process of dialogue and constructive engagement can take place between the political parties and other interested groups and organisations. It is, of course, very much part of the wider peace process and, as a non-negotiating, non-executive body, cannot be the location for the formal negotiation of a lasting settlement; it is the hope of the Forum, however, that it can help lay the basis and prepare the ground for the ultimate success of such formal negotiations.

Forum Secretariat  
November 1995

## Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

### Arrangements in relation to Expenses/Attendance Fees etc. for Delegates who are not members of Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann, the Westminster Parliament or the European Parliament

1. Travel expenses are payable on the basis of Civil Service rates in the Republic. These allow for first-class train travel. In the case of travel by motor car, the rates payable depend on the make and engine capacity of the delegates' cars. New delegates should inform the Secretariat of these. The mileage rates payable currently are set out in the attached statement.
2. Subsistence expenses are payable at Civil Service rates in the Republic at two rates, depending on whether there has been an overnight stay ahead of a Forum meeting or whether attendance is simply for the day of the meeting. The respective rates are:

Night Rate : £71.74p

Day Rate : £20.74p

3. An attendance allowance of £150 is payable in respect of each day the Forum meets, as compensation for loss of earnings or related costs.
4. Expenses for travelling and subsistence and attendance allowances are payable, in the case of each delegation, to a number of persons equal to the sum of its allocation of Members and Alternate Members, except where, due to the operation of any sub-committees, the attendance of additional, substitute members is called for.
5. On each Forum meeting day, it is requested that Delegation Secretaries supply the Secretariat with a list of its Members, Alternate Members or Substitutes present, in respect of whom allowances are claimed.
6. All money amounts in this note and attachments are expressed in Irish pounds.

Forum Secretariat  
28 November, 1997

ScheduleMotor Mileage Rates Effective From 1 January 1996

	Official mileage in a mileage year	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>
		Engine capacity under 1138cc pence	Engine capacity 1138cc to 1387cc pence	Engine capacity 1388cc and over pence
1.	Up to 2,000	49.87	57.70	68.20*
2.	2,001 to 4,000	54.98	62.98	75.79*
3.	4,001 to 6,000	29.44	33.38	37.84*
4.	6,001 to 8,000	27.74	31.35	35.31*
5.	8,001 to 12,000	24.33	27.30	30.26*
6.	12,001 and over	20.92	23.25	26.27

\* Revised rates

Reduced Mileage Rates

The reduced mileage rates which apply to travel in certain special circumstances are set out below. These rates have not changed.

Engine capacity under 1138cc	Engine capacity 1138cc to 1387cc	Engine capacity 1388cc and over
pence	pence	pence
19.87	22.09	24.96