

12 January 1998

PROPOSITIONS ON HEADS OF AGREEMENT

Balanced constitutional change, based on commitment to the principle of consent in all its aspects by both British and Irish Governments, to include both changes to the Irish Constitution and to British constitutional legislation.

Democratically elected institutions in Northern Ireland, to include a Northern Ireland Assembly, elected by a system of proportional representation, exercising devolved executive and legislative responsibility over at least the responsibilities of the six Northern Ireland Departments, and with provisions to ensure that all sections of the community can participate and work together successfully in the operation of these institutions and that all sections of the community are protected.

A new British-Irish Agreement to replace the existing Anglo-Irish Agreement and help establish close co-operation and enhance relationships, embracing:

- Council of Inc
- An intergovernmental Council to deal with the totality of relationships, to include representatives of the British and Irish Governments, the Northern Ireland Administration and the devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales, with meetings twice a year at Summit level.
 - A North/South Ministerial Council to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government in particular areas. Each side will consult, co-operate and take decisions on matters of mutual interest within the mandate of, and accountable to, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas respectively. All decisions will be by agreement between the two sides, North and South.
 - Suitable implementation bodies and mechanisms for policies agreed by the North/South Council in meaningful areas and at an all-island level.
 - Standing intergovernmental machinery between the Irish and British Governments, covering issues of mutual interest, including non-devolved issues for Northern Ireland, when representatives of the Northern Ireland Administration would be involved.

Provision to safeguard the rights of both communities in Northern Ireland, through arrangements for the comprehensive protection of fundamental human, civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, including a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland supplementing the provisions of the European Convention and to achieve full respect for the principles of equity of treatment and freedom from discrimination, and the cultural

The Governments wish to make clear that the position and sensitivities of the victims of violence are fully acknowledged and will continue to be taken into account where appropriate.

6. The propositions need to be elucidated in detailed discussion before parties can assess the overall impact of the proposals. We hope a discussion of the possible propositions will help participants collectively to generate a broad understanding of the key elements of a settlement and of the balances which need to be struck between those elements, and thus make it easier to engage in tough detailed negotiation on specific aspects of it. What we ask is that we now proceed to the detail and all parties make their judgement then.