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Forum.
Jane.*

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SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

Ms Monica McWilliams
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
Block B
Castle Buildings
Stormont

13 September 1996

Dear Monica:

I am writing further to your letter of 13 September and your recent meeting with officials.

I have now had a detailed report on the meeting you had with officials on 17 September. I hope that this meeting provided a useful opportunity to discuss the outstanding draft rules and the other matters you have raised in relation to your participation in the Forum.

So far as the Forum Rules of Procedure are concerned, I have now written to the Forum Chairman confirming my approval of the rules originally submitted to me on 23 July subject to the deletion of rule 6(7) (the flag rule) and an adjustment to the proviso to rule 13(1) (which will provide for the Forum Chairman to record his opinion that an affirmative decision on a non-business motion may reasonably be deemed to command support across the various traditions in Northern Ireland).

As a result, the Rules of Procedure originally submitted to me on 23 July, amended as outlined, will now replace the initial rules of procedure which I had provided for the Forum.



Turning to the other matters you raised with officials, I am grateful to you and to your colleagues for what was clearly a helpful and comprehensive overview of your current assessment of the operation of the Forum. However, as you know from my recent letter to Bronagh Hinds, I continue to take the view that a good many of these matters are, in the final analysis, for the Forum itself to resolve. Therefore, whilst not wishing to minimise in any sense the importance of the matters to which you have drawn attention, I consider that it must be for the Forum itself to determine the best way forward on most if not all of these.

As I mentioned in my letter to Bronagh Hinds, I shall wish to keep under review the ability of the Forum to discharge its statutory remit under Section 3(1) of the 1996 Act. In doing so, however, I very much hope that the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition will continue to play a full and constructive role in the work of the Forum. I consider that the Forum has an important role to perform and I am confident that your Coalition will make a valuable and worthwhile contribution to this work.

Yours faithfully,
Arlith Mayhew
