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23 March 1999

Dear Monica,

ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES ON D'HONDT AND EXCLUSION/REMOVAL

At yesterday morning's round table meeting, a number of the parties raised questions on various aspects of the procedure relating to the appointment of Ministers in the shadow phase under the D'Hondt formula.

I have said that I will call an Assembly meeting in the week commencing 29 March. What will happen when the Assembly meets is set out in the additional Standing Orders which I determined on 8 March.

On the question of exclusion/removal, Standing Order 22, paragraph 2(b) states that "without prejudice to Standing Order 6, paragraphs (3) and (4), if notice of a motion under Standing Order 24, paragraphs (1) and (2) is given, which meets the requirements of paragraph (5) of that Standing Order, he (the Presiding Officer) shall defer the procedure until the Assembly has voted on that motion but shall then proceed immediately."

In the handling of any debate on an exclusion motion, the Presiding Officer shall as set out in additional Standing Order 24, paragraph 6 "ensure that the person moving the motion and the member who, or leader of the party which, would be excluded have sufficient opportunities to present their case and to reply to arguments presented by the other side; and, when necessary to achieve this, the Presiding Officer may suspend debate on that motion until a time and date he shall set for its resumption."



It is for the Assembly and the Presiding Officer to take the procedural aspects of the additional Standing Orders forward and to be ready to respond to whatever may transpire when the Assembly meets, within the terms of the Standing Orders. I understand the Presiding Officer has been considering how this and other issues may be addressed with members of his Committee (CAPO) and that a further CAPO meeting is scheduled for today. This forum may be the most appropriate way of dealing with the procedural points raised during this mornings discussions.

Yes Surely
J. Mowlam
PP MARJORIE MOWLAM

(Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in her absence)