

RECORD OF A PLENARY SESSION HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
ON THE MORNING OF 2 JULY 1991

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Mr Molyneux
Minister of State	Mr Close	Mr Cunningham
PUS	Mr Maguire	Mr Smith
Mr Fell	Mr Dickson	Mr Empey
Mr Pilling	Mrs Bell	Mr McGimpsey
Mr Thomas	Mr McBride	Mr Allen
Mr McNeill	Mr Morrow	
		<u>UDUP</u>
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	Dr Paisley
Mr D J R Hill	Mr Mallon	Mr McCrea
Mr Brooker	Mr McGrady	Mr Vitty
Mr Hallett	Mr Haughey	
<u>Others Present</u>	Dr Hendron	
Mr Pawson	Mr Farren	
	Mr Feely	

The meeting began at 10.40 and concluded at 11.25.

2. The Government Team proposed beginning the meeting with a summary of the previous day's discussion. The SDLP said, however, that before doing so they wished to discuss the timetable for the remaining period of the Talks. It was necessary to clarify the position on this before deciding whether there was any purpose to be served by continuing the current discussions.

2. The Alliance Party said that they also wished to have a clear decision on the future timetable but were content to have the summary of the previous day's discussions first.

3. The Government Team then summarised the discussions on the previous day. The Business Committee had met at 13.00, but had not secured a meeting of minds on a proposal to use the Government paper as the basis for identifying "general affirmations". The first plenary session of the afternoon had discussed the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. There had been a full debate but no basis for agreement had emerged. The evening session had discussed the nature of the Northern Ireland community and the question of identities but no attempt to reach agreement had been made.

3. The Government Team said that the discussions on 1 July had revealed a difference of view as to whether the time had now come for moving to detailed discussion of structures or whether the discussion of general principles and affirmations should continue. That issue had not been resolved on 1 July. The Government Team had made it clear that they were planning to continue discussions during the current week but accepted that the current phase of discussions would come to an end when they informed the party delegations that the Secretariat had begun preparing for the 16 July Conference.

4. The Alliance Party then sought clarification of media reports of statements by the DUP leader regarding a meeting with the Irish Government. The DUP leader said that he had simply made clear in response to a question from a journalist that neither he nor the UUP leader had sought a meeting with the Irish Government.

5. The Alliance Party said that what the DUP leader had said appeared to rule out the possibility of having a meeting of strand two before the 16 July Conference. It was however for the Secretary of State to decide whether and when to move to strand two.

6. The DUP commented that it was in fact the SDLP who had ruled out the possibility of moving to strand two before 16 July. He had simply made clear that he had not sought a meeting with Mr Haughey. With regard to a move to strand two, the DUP agreed that it was for the Secretary of State to decide this in consultation with the parties, but there had been no such approach from the Secretary of State.

7. The Alliance repeated that there was nevertheless a problem. If it appeared that there was no possibility of a meeting of strand two before 16 July and therefore no prospect of completing strand one, what was the purpose of continuing the current discussions?

8. The DUP said that the Alliance Party question should be addressed to the two Governments, not to the Unionists. It was not the Unionists who were bringing the current process to an end. They had made clear consistently that they would not continue the discussions if the Conference were meeting. It was not therefore their responsibility if the process came to an end.

9. The SDLP said that they were prepared to continue the discussions if the other parties were willing to do so but saw little purpose in this unless these were likely to be productive. It was necessary to know what timetable was envisaged. There was no point in simply "playing out time". The SDLP saw no point in tabling any specific proposals unless there was a prospect of substantive business taking place. The SDLP said that, with regard to the Alliance Party's proposed timetable, it was not realistic to envisage completing strand two discussions in three days. The timetable should remain as set out in the 26 March statement. It remained the SDLP view that it was necessary to identify common themes before it was possible to consider detailed frameworks. The process of identifying such themes had not yet been completed. The statement by the DUP leader had come across as clearly indicating that there was no possibility of strand two beginning before 16 July. If that were the case then strand one could also not be completed. The timetable question was therefore of overriding importance.

10. The UUP said that their position had been clear throughout the 15-month period leading up to the current Talks. Discussion of all three strands would come to an end when the "single period of suspension [of the Conference] expires".

11. The Government Team summed up. The 26 March statement had envisaged a gap between specified dates. The Unionists had asked if the gap could be extended in view of the delay in starting plenary sessions. The Government Team had indicated, however, that the dates envisaged in the 26 March statement would stand and the 16 July Conference would go ahead. It was now clear that the current discussions could not be brought to a conclusion in the time available. There had however been constructive engagement in the previous week and a real dialogue had been emerged. The fact that the issues had been seriously addressed was important in view of the Unionist position that the 16 July Conference would bring the present process to an end. It was important to have a basis on which it might be possible to resume in the future, and to have a clear understanding on how long the current discussions should continue. The Government Team therefore proposed meeting the party

leaders individually to resolve these questions, while making clear that there was no intention of seeking to change the positions of any of the parties regarding the 16 July Conference. This was agreed.

TALKS SECRETARIAT