

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Peter Brooke MP, accompanied by the Minister of State, Dr Brian Mawhinney MP, today met the leaders of the four main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon James Molyneaux MP, Mr John Hume MP MEP, Dr Ian Paisley MP MEP, and Dr John Alderdice.

2. Together they reviewed the outcome of the round of discussions which have taken place since last September in the search for agreement on a basis for fresh political talks. They reasserted their support for a process of talks based on the statement of 26 March. However, they concluded with regret that it was not possible in present circumstances to proceed to launch fresh substantive talks on the lines envisaged.

3. They agreed that the various exchanges which had taken place over the past two years had been valuable in producing a basis for political dialogue which retained great potential and had yet to be fully exploited. They recalled the talks which took place between the parties in June and July last year and reaffirmed the view that these had produced genuine dialogue and provided a firm foundation for further substantive exchanges in due course. They expressed the hope that this would be taken further at the appropriate time.

4. The party leaders agreed that, in the meantime, at the invitation of the Secretary of State, they would meet to consider matters of current concern, including in the economic field, in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland. They also agreed to consider an invitation to field party spokesmen to take part in intensive factual briefings, under the chairmanship of the Minister of State, on present financial and other administrative arrangements affecting the people of Northern Ireland.

5. The party leaders expressed the hope that by working together and making representations on matters of common concern they would contribute to the growth of mutual trust and confidence within the community in Northern Ireland,

*which will eventually aid the talks process.*