

Alliance.

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FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

THIRTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING,
DUBLIN CASTLE ON TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 1995

Chairperson: Judge Catherine McGuinness

I hereby certify the following to be a true and accurate transcript of my shorthand notes of the above-named proceedings.

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CHAIRPERSON: And the second questioner in this group is Dr. John Alderdice, leader of the Alliance Party.

MR. JOHN ALDERDICE: Thank you Madam Chair, and again a welcome from the Alliance Party, Mr. Deputy President, and indeed to your wife, Mrs. De Klerk, too. Thank you very much for your interest. It is very important to us, not only your interest in coming today, but indeed last year your government took the trouble to ensure that a number of politicians from political parties in Northern Ireland were able to visit South Africa and to meet with representatives of all the political parties there. And I would thank you not only for that opportunity, but I would want you to know that it has had an affect on the political process. There were some of the experiences that were gained there that have had a very constructive and positive impact on our process, though at this stage perhaps not altogether understood by people here; and I would say too from ordinary people, a word of thanks, because many, many people in Northern Ireland from right across the community, when they saw what you were achieving with your colleagues in South Africa said in a spiritive friendly rivalry, "if they can do it in South Africa, surely we can do it here", and so you have been and your colleagues have been an inspiration to us and I thank you for that.

You said that there are differences in our situations, and of course that is absolutely true, but there are three areas were I would welcome some further light being shed from you. Firstly; I have been struck by the intensity of the talks and of the committment of every one throughout the community. You spoke, for example, of cabinet meeting three times week to get reports back from negotiators who were obviously spending enormous amounts of

time. Right throughout the community of South Africa people were meeting, you mentioned many forums, people were meeting at a local level and at every level. I have been struck by the intensity of work and commitment, and I wonder do you feel that was important in creating a degree of momentum and moving things forward.

Secondly; you have spoken about inclusivity, about every one being involved, but I am also aware that it was at times necessary to develop the negotiation of sufficient consensus, and I would like you perhaps to say a little bit about that, because it seems that that hints at the notion that sometimes not every one maybe prepared to fully agree, and yet the process must go on. You have mentioned the boycotts, but I think there were other situations, aside from boycott, were sufficient consensus as a notion was important. And, thirdly; you have mentioned the question of the arms, and you have indicated that, sadly perhaps, it is not been possible to fully resolve that matter, but I would be grateful to know how you did try to address it. You mentioned things about control of arms caches, locations, information being given about these matters, and so on, at some point before the completion of the discussions, and we would welcome if you could say a little bit more about that, not necessarily because it will be a pattern for ourselves. I think we find ourselves at some what of a hurdle here and we welcome any light being shed upon it.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.