

MEMBERS

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 1998 AT 14.00

CHAIRMEN: General de Chastelain
Mr Holkeri

THOSE PRESENT: British Government
Irish Government

Alliance
Labour
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
Progressive Unionist Party
Sinn Féin
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Ulster Democratic Party
Ulster Unionist Party

Item 1 - Minutes of Previous Meeting (11 March)

These were agreed as circulated. Under matters arising from the minutes, the British Government said it was no longer considering an alternative Northern Ireland venue for the talks. However accommodation had been reserved in Belfast for the use of participants in the remaining weeks of the Talks. In response to queries from Sinn Féin about the scheduling of the next Strand Three Liaison meeting, the two Governments said they would consult each party to discuss the Strand Three paper circulated and then reflect on how best to proceed. The SDLP felt that a cross strand meeting would also be required.

Item 2 - Scheduling arrangements for the week commencing 30 March & 6 April

Week commencing 30 March

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the Review Plenary had agreed to meet on 30 March from 10.30 to 12.30 and that, following his consultations with the participants, Senator Mitchell might suggest a cross-strand meeting at 14.00 that day. The agenda for a cross-strand meeting would emerge from the Senator's consultations with the parties. The Committee agreed, after some discussion, to recommend that the remainder of the week be set aside for bilateral and multilateral meetings, with meetings to review progress, in plenary or strand format, at the call of the respective Chairmen. The British Government said it would not suspend the Northern Ireland Forum if negotiations met on Friday, and the UUP said it could field representatives for bilateral meetings but not a Plenary on that day. Accordingly, the Committee recommended bilateral meetings, but no plenary could be scheduled for Friday, 3 April.

Week commencing 6 April

The Committee recommended that participants would meet for as long as was necessary to reach agreement, with the scheduling of business to be determined nearer the time.

Item 3 - Any Other Business

The Committee recommended that the next meeting of the Liaison Sub-Committee on Confidence Building Measures should take place at 14.30 on 31 March, when the topic for discussion would be policing. It was recommended that the next meeting of the Liaison Sub-Committee on Decommissioning be left to the call of the Chair.

Item 4 - Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Business Committee be left to the call of the Chair.

**Independent Chairmen Notetakers
27 March 1998**