

**SUMMARY RECORD OF FINAL PLENARY SESSION -
FRIDAY 10 APRIL 1998 (17.05)**

CHAIRMEN: Senator G Mitchell
Mr Holkeri
General de Chastelain

THOSE PRESENT: The Prime Minister & British Government
The Taoiseach & 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

1. The Chairman convened the meeting at 17.05 and stated, before beginning the final Plenary session, that he wished to explain the presence of television cameras in the conference room. He indicated that the cameras would not be filming during the formal business of the Plenary, but afterwards when a short ceremony would occur for which he asked participants to remain in their seats. The ceremony itself would comprise a statement from the Chair, followed by each of the party leaders who would speak in the order of the electoral strength of their parties at the election for the talks in 1996. The Chairman asked that no demonstrations, other than perhaps applause, accompany the proceedings from this point onwards.

2. The Chairman said he wished to convene the final Plenary session now that all the participants were present to approve the multi party agreement, final copies of which

had been distributed to all parties that morning. The Chairman asked whether there were any amendments to the document?

3. Sinn Féin said it had no amendments to propose but did have a number of concerns about the document. The party said it didn't wish to tie up the final Plenary with these but rather have them placed on record. The Chairman acknowledged Sinn Féin's comments and stated that its concerns would be dealt with at the end of the session. Sinn Fein's comments are attached at Annex A.

4. The NIWC said it also had an issue of concern but was content to place this on record at the end of the meeting. This is attached at Annex B. The Chairman then stated, on hearing no further amendments, that the period for raising amendments had ended.

5. The Chairman, continuing, said that before proceeding to a vote on the document, he wished to welcome the Prime Minister and Taoiseach and offer each of them the opportunity to make a few remarks at this stage. Both Prime Ministers proposed that the proceedings move to a vote.

6. Sinn Féin said the Chairman was aware, as were other party leaders who engaged with it, that the party's negotiating team would have to report back to its Ard Comhairle and would therefore not be in a position to vote now. Sinn Féin said it would assess the document in a positive way. It wanted to see it developed and would bring to it the attitude of all its recent endeavours in the process. The party said it believed everyone had

difficulties with the document but it hoped it would signify a new beginning rather than an end. It said it would let the Chairman know the outcome of its deliberations in due course.

7. The UUP said its leadership was accountable to the Executive and Council of the party and the latter would be meeting on Saturday 18 April. It would therefore follow all the necessary procedures with regard to that position since it was a democratic party.

8. The Chairman asked for any further comments. Hearing none he proposed the participants move to a vote. He reminded everyone of the voting procedures as set out in Rule 34. Accordingly the Chairman said he would ask each party, in alphabetical order, for their vote. The British Government, Irish Government, Alliance, Labour, NIWC and PUP voted in favour of the document. Sinn Féin said it would register its vote when instructed to do so. The SDLP, UDP and UUP voted in favour of the document with the UUP reminding the Chairman about its earlier caveats. The Chairman said that, pursuant to rule 34, sufficient consensus had been achieved and he asked whether there was any further business.

9. The Chairman said he would shortly adjourn the final Plenary session since the process had now accomplished what it had set out to do. As this was the final meeting, the Chairman said he wished to thank each and all the participants for their courtesy, courage and determination in reaching this point. He then asked the Prime Minister and Taoiseach to comment.

10. The Prime Minister said he wished to thank the Chairman and his colleagues from everyone present for all their tremendous efforts in bringing the process to this conclusion. The Taoiseach seconded those remarks and thanked all the delegates and officials who had also played their part. General de Chastelain said it had been a great privilege to have been involved with the process and all of those who had helped to move it to this point. He wished Godspeed for the work which lay ahead and expressed his appreciation at being able to work alongside two such distinguished individuals. Mr Holkeri reflected on how representatives of the two traditions now spoke about living together and contrasted this with his first involvement in the process in June 96. He wished everyone the very best in their future efforts.

11. Following further brief comments from the Chairman, each of the parties paid tributes of thanks and appreciation to the three Chairmen, the Prime Minister and Taoiseach. The Chairman then paid tribute to the staff of both Governments and those in the Independent Chairmen's office, the Talks Administration Unit, the former Prime Minister and Taoiseach who were in office when the process commenced in June 96 and their respective officials in both jurisdictions. With these comments the Chairman declared the Plenary closed "sine die" and reminded everyone of the format for the impending closing ceremony which would be transmitted on live television.

**Independent Chairmen Notetakers
22 April 1998**

Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister

Bertie Ahern TD
Taoiseach

Senator George J Mitchell

General John de Chastelain

Prime Minister Harri Holkeri

Rt Hon Dr Majorie Mowlam MP
Secretary of State for NI

David Andrews TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs