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To: HQ
For: Secretary Gallagher

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

Subj: Secretary of State's meeting with Trimble and Mallon (27 Oct)

1. We have obtained the following read-out on an hour-long meeting which the Secretary of State, who was accompanied by Paul Murphy and Bill Jeffrey, had with David Trimble and Seamus Mallon last night.

2. It was a very friendly and businesslike discussion. Trimble outlined the proposal for a round-table meeting on Thursday with all parties who were prepared to participate. Separate bilaterals, and possibly trilaterals, would take place with non-participating parties. Tomorrow's morning session would address future Ministerial portfolios while the afternoon session would deal with North/South cooperation.

MP/UKUP
initial read

3. Mallon felt that, while agreement on these two topics is unlikely to be achieved tomorrow, the meeting should at least give a good sense of where the parties stood at present. A further meeting would almost certainly be needed.

4. When Mallon emphasised the importance of agreement being reached on six implementation bodies and six areas for cooperation, Trimble indicated that the figure of six could be exceeded in either instance, if this was judged desirable. He agreed with Mallon, however, that tomorrow's meeting would be useful primarily in terms of "clearing the ground" and that he did not anticipate definitive decisions (particularly in the absence of the Irish Government's input on the North/South issues).

Interesting

5. Trimble complained about the quality of the briefing material provided by NI Departments on the options for implementation bodies, claiming that it was not sufficiently detailed or focussed. Jeffrey observed that the intention had been to supply succinct technical advice while leaving strategic judgements to the political

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level. Mallon supported him, pointing out that everything had had to be rushed in view of the time constraints.

8 *See*
6. On the question of Irish Government involvement, Trimble said that he envisaged an early meeting between himself, Mallon, the Irish Government, the British Government and "some others". While he acknowledged vaguely that there were delicate judgements to be made, he was unwilling to spell out at this stage who the latter would comprise. It was important that this meeting take place next week. Mallon suggested Monday, given the general exodus to Brussels for the remainder of the week. Trimble agreed, underlining the need for visible progress to be made as an antidote to what some might regard as junketeering in Brussels. He hoped that the Irish Government would be represented at the meeting by a suitably authoritative figure.

7. Jeffrey asked whether Trimble and Mallon would be going into tomorrow's meeting with a broad measure of agreement among themselves in advance. Mallon made clear that they did not yet have an agreed view on the issues for tomorrow. Trimble agreed, saying that he wanted to use tomorrow to probe these matters further. He noted, for example, that Sinn Féin wanted an Irish language body among the implementation bodies: he was not clear what this body would do. Equally, a lot of thought would need to be given in the discussion on internal structures to the precise role of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the question of junior Ministers. Mallon agreed, underlining the need to "get the centre right".

8. Asked by the Secretary of State how many Departments might emerge, Trimble replied that that would all come down to political horse-trading and would not speculate further.

9. The Secretary of State suggested that it would be best for the British Government to stand back from tomorrow's meeting and let Trimble and Mallon do the running there. However, the Government would be in a position to follow up quickly on Friday as required. Mallon said he would have no objection to officials attending tomorrow. Trimble agreed but indicated that he saw them being of use primarily for the North/South discussion. (Note: It was subsequently agreed that Tony McCusker would be in attendance throughout the day).

10. The Secretary of State asked whether the staffing arrangements made for the First Minister and Deputy First Minister were satisfactory. Trimble replied, somewhat grudgingly, that they were "better than before". Mallon agreed but added lightheartedly that he was still waiting for a "David Lavery of my own".
11. In conclusion, there was some discussion of the role to be played by "the centre" in the future arrangements and whether, for example, it might have a direct relationship with the Department of Finance in the interests of budgetary coordination.