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COMMUNIQUÉ

Dublin Summit of the British-Irish Council

The British-Irish Council established under the Good Friday Agreement held its second summit meeting today in Dublin. The Irish and British Governments were represented by the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD, who also chaired the meeting, and by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair MP.

The devolved administrations were represented by Mr. Jack McConnell, First Minister, Scottish Executive; The Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan, AM, First Minister, National Assembly for Wales; The Rt Hon David Trimble MP, MLA First Minister and Mr Mark Durkan, MLA Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland Executive.

The Isle of Man was represented by Hon. Donald Gelling MHK, Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government; Jersey was represented by Senator Pierre Horsfall OBE, President of the States of Jersey Policy and Resources Committee; and Guernsey was represented by Deputy Laurie Morgan, President, States of Guernsey Advisory and Finance Committee.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council is a forum for its members to exchange information, discuss, consult and endeavour to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within their respective competencies.

Drugs

The main focus of today's meeting was the issue of drug misuse, and how co-operation in this area might be developed within the British-Irish Council. The meeting underlined the commitment of all members at the highest political level to addressing this widespread and growing problem. The proximity and strong cultural similarities of members of the Council afford an excellent opportunity for enhanced co-operation and the development of common approaches.

The British-Irish Council today agreed elements for a framework for future co-operation which will focus on the two key areas of Demand Reduction (incorporating prevention and treatment) and Supply Reduction (incorporating law enforcement). This future co-operation will include the further development of Information Exchanges and Joint Actions.

Among the areas to be covered by enhanced Information Exchange will be co-operation on models of best practice, research data pilot programmes and rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. The Council also noted the importance of information technology in enhancing information exchange, and agreed to further examine possibilities in this area.

It was agreed that specific Joint Actions could include Joint Awareness Campaigns, for example, highlighting the risks of heroin use and targeting young people who are using 'recreational' drugs. It was also agreed that joint training initiatives could include exchange programmes for participants from BIC members engaged in drug-related work.

Bearing in mind the varying competences among BIC members in relation to the law enforcement aspects of the drugs issue, it was agreed that the members of the BIC with responsibility in this area will pursue these aspects in the appropriate fora.

The importance of targeting the assets of criminals engaged in drug trafficking was widely acknowledged. In this context, the background to the establishment of the Criminal Assets Bureau in Ireland and its success in targeting the assets of drug barons was regarded as significant.

In order to advance work in the agreed areas, the Council has today established a group of

Senior Officials, mandated to prepare recommendations for future co-operation, to be reviewed by a Ministerial meeting on drugs which will report on progress to a future British-Irish Council Summit.

Following the discussion on drugs the Council was updated on work being undertaken in sectoral areas by the relevant lead administrations.

Environment

BIC Environment Ministers met in London in October 2000 where they agreed that there were many environmental issues of mutual interest on which the group would provide an excellent forum for discussion and closer co-operation.

The Group agreed that other specific work areas would be taken forward by the member administrations.

Ireland and the Isle of Man are taking the lead in examining the issue of radioactive waste from Sellafield. The administrations are preparing a paper on this, which will be discussed at a future meeting of the Environment Group.

The UK Government has taken the lead in examining climate change issues. The climate change group composed of BIC members has met twice and has agreed to extend the forthcoming UK Climate Impacts Programme 2002 climate change scenarios to cover all the BIC administrations.

The Scottish Executive looks forward to hosting the next British-Irish Council Environment Meeting in the spring of next year in Edinburgh. The meeting will include a discussion, initiated and led by the Executive, on the difficulties and challenges of finding more sustainable ways of dealing with generated waste.

Social Inclusion

The Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales provided an update on the Council's work on social inclusion. Recognising the strong commonalities shared by

communities across the BIC area, the proposals include a 'community conference' to promote sharing of good practice on particular aspects of Social Inclusion. A social inclusion section of the British-Irish Council website to be launched shortly will be established to promote community networking and engage with communities on the British-Irish Council's programme of work on Social Inclusion. Officials will remain in close contact in this area prior to the community conference.

Transport

The inaugural Ministerial Transport sectoral meeting was convened in Belfast on 19 December 2000 under the joint chairmanship of the Northern Ireland First Minister, The Rt Hon David Trimble MP MLA and Deputy First Minister, Mr Séamus Mallon, MP, MLA.

The members of the Council held a wide-ranging debate on the basis of the discussion paper prepared by the Northern Ireland Executive and agreed on the need for an integrated and sustainable approach to transport issues, which would take account of the relevant economic, social and environmental issues.

The members of the Council identified a range of key issues which will inform their future work including the problems of peripherality; road safety; regional air links; issues surrounding transport in rural areas; exchange of information and experiences in areas such as Public Private Partnerships and links between transport and land-use planning. The Council also referred to existing and future strategies for dealing with integrated transport issues and policies.

The Council agreed that the Northern Ireland Executive would convene an early meeting of senior officials to examine an agreed menu of options and prepare detailed recommendations for work in a number of initial priority areas. Recommendations would then be submitted to a further meeting for approval.

Knowledge Economy

Jersey chaired a wide-ranging discussion of BIC officials on the Knowledge Economy in November 2000 and a number of further useful discussions have been held since then.

A key issue identified was the problem that arose from a lack of IT skills amongst significant

groups within the population, especially in remoter areas. This 'digital divide' was seen as a central problem as well as acting as a barrier to a range of strategies to increase social inclusion. Jersey is currently establishing a project to map and analyse member administrations' initiatives to improve access to the Internet and to ensure the bulk of the population can readily acquire relevant computing skills. Jersey will be hosting a major conference for decision makers, 'Bridging the Digital Divide', in April 2002, in order to take this work forward.

Jersey, with the BIC Secretariat, has also taken the lead in designing the BIC web-site, in consultation with other member administrations. In the first instance the aim is to create a public site as a showcase for the work of the British-Irish Council. The aim is to launch the public site in Spring 2002.

Other areas of work

The Council agreed that Guernsey will take forward work in the area of Tourism. The Isle of Man will take the lead in Health, with a focus on the application of Tele-medicine.

The Chairman on behalf of the Council thanked administrations for the work to date.

The Council agreed that the next summit level meeting would be hosted by Jersey in April 2002, and that the meeting would focus on the issue of Knowledge Economy. Scotland and Wales will host a summit in September 2002. Northern Ireland will host a summit in early 2003.

British-Irish Council

30 November 2001

List of Delegates

<u>Irish Government</u>	
Taoiseach	Bertie Ahern, TD
Tánaiste	Mary Harney, TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Brian Cowen, TD
Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform	John O'Donoghue, TD
Minister for Health and Children	Mícheál Martin, TD
Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs (with special responsibility for Overseas Development Assistance and Human Rights)	Liz O'Donnell, TD
Minister of State for Local Development (with special responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy)	Eoin Ryan, TD
<u>British Government</u>	
Prime Minister	The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	The Rt Hon John Reid MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary (with responsibility for Anti-Drugs co-ordination and organised crime)	Bob Ainsworth MP
<u>Northern Ireland Executive</u>	

First Minister	The Rt Hon David Trimble MP, MLA
Deputy First Minister	Mark Durkan MLA
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	Bríd Rogers MLA
Minister of the Environment	Sam Foster MLA
Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Bairbre de Brún MLA
<u>Scottish Executive</u>	
First Minister	Jack McConnell MSP
Deputy First Minister	The Rt Hon Jim Wallace MSP
Deputy Minister for Justice	Dr Richard Simpson MSP
<u>National Assembly for Wales</u>	
First Minister	The Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM
Acting Deputy First Minister	Jenny Randerson AM
Minister for Health and Social Services	Jane Hutt AM
<u>Isle of Man</u>	
Chief Minister	Hon Donald Gelling MHK
Chief Secretary	Fred Kissack

<u>Jersey</u>	
President, Policy and Resources Committee	Senator Pierre Horsfall OBE
Chief Executive, Policy and Resources Department	John Mills
<u>Guernsey</u>	
President, Advisory and Finance Committee	Deputy Laurie Morgan
Chief Executive, Advisory and Finance Committee	Mike Brown