

Plenary JC 23 January 2009

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER AT MAGEE

23 JANUARY 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The seventh plenary meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at the University of Ulster at Magee on 23 January 2009.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive delegation was led by the First Minister, The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA and the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MP MLA. The Irish Government delegation was led by the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen TD. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. Ministers had a broad discussion of the economic challenges facing them including the need for continuing practical and mutually beneficial North South cooperation to assist both administrations in their efforts to deal with the economic downturn.
4. The Council discussed the recent animal feed contamination incident which had a serious impact on farmers and food processors in both jurisdictions. The Council noted the concerns that had been raised by the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to the matter and noted that relevant Ministers have been engaged in intensive discussions about direct and indirect assistance. It requested them to continue to treat this as a matter of urgency.

NSMC Progress Report

5. The Council noted a report on key developments in the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) through the fourteen Council meetings held since the last Plenary in February 2008 and welcomed the mutually beneficial co-operation taken forward at these meetings including:

- the good progress on the A5 (North West Gateway to Aughnacloy) and A8 (Belfast to Larne) projects with the first key milestones being achieved ahead of target in Autumn 2008.
- the intensification of work on the bilateral agreement on the EU Convention on Driving Disqualifications and the mutual recognition of penalty points.
- the successful launch of the PEACE III and Interreg IVA Programmes.

- intensified co-operation on child protection including a cross-border awareness campaign.
- the 10 point all-island action plan on suicide prevention.
- progress on the removal of illegally dumped waste.
- the official opening of the new Waterways Ireland Headquarters in Enniskillen.
- progress in addressing educational underachievement, co-operation on Traveller education and in special education including the services provided by the Middletown Centre for Autism.
- progress on a draft all-island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy;
- the success to date of the cross-border mobility website.
- work on the transfer of pensions on a cross-border basis and on cross-border banking issues, including the publication of information on the cost of personal cross-border banking transactions on the mobility website, all of which are of direct relevance to greater cross-border mobility.

St. Andrews Agreement Review

6. The Council welcomed the progress made to date by the St. Andrews Agreement Review Group. It noted that the experts/advisers have completed their report on efficiency and value for money of the existing Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Ltd.
7. The Council requested the Review Group, in consultation with the relevant sponsor Departments and Ministers, to consider the recommendations made by the experts/advisers and to submit a report to the next meeting of the Plenary.
8. The Council requested the Review Group to complete work on its remaining terms of reference and to submit proposals to a meeting of the NSMC in Plenary format before the end of 2009.

North South Consultative Forum

9. The Council noted the Irish Government's proposals on the role, format, membership and operation of a North South Consultative Forum.
- 10..It noted the progress made in reviewing the Civic Forum in Northern Ireland.
11. It agreed to consider this matter once that review is complete.

North South Parliamentary Forum

12. The Council noted the ongoing discussions between the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly on the North South Parliamentary Forum and noted the agreement to establish two working groups to develop proposals for such a body.
- 13.The Council agreed to keep this matter under review.

Future NSMC Meetings

14. The Council considered and approved a schedule of NSMC meetings to take place over the coming months and agreed that its next meeting in Plenary format, will be hosted by the Irish Government in June 2009.

15. The Council conveyed its thanks to Professor Richard Barnett, Vice Chancellor of the University of Ulster, Professor Jim Allen, Pro Vice Chancellor and Provost of Magee College, the staff and the students for their co-operation in the organisation of the Council meeting and for the provision of excellent facilities.

Joint Secretariat

23 January 2009

Northern Ireland Executive	Irish Government
The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA (First Minister)	Brian Cowen TD (Taoiseach)
Martin McGuinness MP MLA (deputy First Minister)	Mary Coughlan TD (Tánaiste and Minister for Finance)
Michelle Gildernew MP MLA (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)	Brian Lenihan TD (Minister for Finance)
Gregory Campbell MP MLA (Minister of Culture, Arts & Leisure)	Mary Harney TD (Minister for Health and Children)
Caitriona Ruane MLA (Minister of Education)	Noel Dempsey TD (Minister for Transport)
Arlene Foster MLA (Minister of the Environment)	Micheál Martin TD (Minister for Foreign Affairs)
Conor Murphy MP MLA (Minister for Regional Development)	Martin Cullen TD (Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism)
Margaret Ritchie MLA (Minister for Social Development)	Éamon Ó Cuív TD (Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs)
Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA (Junior Minister)	Mary Hanafin TD (Minister for Social and Family Affairs)
Gerry Kelly MLA (Junior Minister)	Eamon Ryan TD (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources)
	Brendan Smith TD (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)
	Batt O'Keefe TD (Minister for Education and Science)

