

Plenary JC 26 September 2000

North/South Ministerial Council

Joint Communiqué

Plenary Meeting - Dublin, 26 September 2000

1. The second Plenary meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council was held in Dublin on 26 September 2000.
2. The Irish Government delegation was led by the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, TD, who chaired the meeting, and by the Tánaiste, Ms Mary Harney TD. The Northern Ireland Executive Committee delegation was led by the Rt. Hon. David Trimble, MP, MLA, First Minister and Mr. Seamus Mallon, MP, MLA, Deputy First Minister. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. This was the first Plenary meeting of the Council to be held in the South. The Council took an overview of progress to date in getting the new North/South institutions up and running. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the level of progress, but shared the view that it was important that all of the institutions placed continued focus on delivering tangible actions for mutual benefit in their various areas.

Report on Sectoral Meetings

4. The Council noted the satisfactory progress it had made in setting in train a substantial programme of work in respect both of the North/South Implementation Bodies and of the agreed Areas for Co-operation. Since the inaugural Plenary meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council in Armagh last December the Council has met 13 times in sectoral format. These occasions consisted of meetings between Irish Government Ministers and Ministers from Northern Ireland dealing with issues relating to the six North/South Implementation Bodies and with various issues of mutual interest in regard to Health, Education, Agriculture and Environment. Both sides looked forward to making further significant progress in the various Sectoral Councils in the coming months. In this regard both sides attached particular importance to the forthcoming establishment of the new Tourism Company which will have responsibility for the marketing overseas of the island of Ireland as a tourism destination.

Future Work Programme

5. The Council agreed a schedule of Sectoral Meetings to take place in the Autumn, including a first meeting in the Transport Sector. It is anticipated that the Council will meet by agreement in Institutional Format before the next Plenary meeting.

Implementation Bodies - Staffing

6. The Council agreed procedures for recruiting the Chief Executives of a number of Implementation Bodies and approved the terms and conditions associated with these appointments as well as conditions of service for staff generally employed by the Implementation Bodies. The Council also agreed specific proposals in regard to grading, staffing, numbers and remuneration in the Trade and Business Development Body.

Budgetary process

7. The Council agreed an initial opinion on the budgets for the Implementation Bodies for the period 2001 to 2003. NSMC envisages that the total to be spent by the six Bodies in 2001 will be some IR£64m (£48m Sterling). The proposal is that the southern contribution should be IR£49m (£37m Sterling) with IR£15m (£11m Sterling) from the North. This reflects the continuing development of the work of the Bodies which are now expected to employ some 900 staff in total during the course of 2001. The details of the budget proposals will now be considered further as part of the processes for planning public spending North and South. Final estimates for the Bodies will be submitted to the NSMC in October/November, following approval by the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee.

Independent Consultative Forum

8. The Council agreed to initiate a study on an Independent North/South Consultative Forum, appointed by the two Administrations, as recommended for consideration in the Multi-Party Agreement, Strand Two, Paragraph 19. The Council agreed that a Working Group of officials from both Administrations and the Joint Secretariat would be established to take forward the study and report to the next meeting of the Plenary.

Obstacles to Cross Border Mobility

9. The Agenda for Government published by the Northern Ireland Executive Committee on 29 June, 2000 identified actions to support North/South development including the need to take action to remove barriers to living/working North or South. In this context the Irish Government agreed to co-operate with the Northern Ireland Executive Committee in taking forward a study, through a steering group of officials, North and South, on the obstacles to mobility between the two parts of the island. This steering group will report to the Council. The costs of the study will be shared equally between the two Administrations.

Competitiveness

10. The Council had a useful exchange of views on an Irish Government paper on enhancing competitiveness of the two economies on the island, North and South. It agreed that it would be valuable if further consideration could be given to the matter by

the Council in its Trade and Business Development format at its next meeting on 27 October with a view to reporting to the Plenary at its next meeting.

EU Issues

11. Mr Mark Durkan MLA, Minister of Finance and Personnel briefed the Council on progress in relation to the next round of structural funds from the Northern Ireland perspective. Mr Brian Cowen TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs responded setting out the Irish Government perspective. Mr Cowen also provided the Council with a brief overview of recent developments of mutual interest in relation to the future of the EU, including the continuing negotiations in the Intergovernmental Conference and Enlargement of the EU.

Date of Next Meeting

12. The Council agreed that its next meeting in Plenary format will be in Northern Ireland in March 2001.

Joint Secretariat

26 September 2000

Annex

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive Committee
Bertie Ahern TD (Taoiseach)	Rt Hon David Trimble MP MLA (First Minister)
Mary Harney TD (Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment)	Seamus Mallon MP MLA (Deputy First Minister)
Michael Woods TD (Minister for Education and Science)	Bairbre de Brún MLA (Minister of Health, Social Services & Public Safety)
Mary O'Rourke TD (Minister for Public Enterprise)	Mark Durkan MLA (Minister of Finance and Personnel)
Joe Walsh TD (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)	Sir Reg Empey MLA (Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment)
Brian Cowen TD (Minister for Foreign Affairs)	Sean Farren MLA (Minister of Higher & Further Education, Training & Employment)
Noel Dempsey TD (Minister for the Environment and Local Government)	Sam Foster MLA (Minister of the Environment)

Dermot Ahern TD (Minister for Social, Community & Family Affairs)	Michael McGimpsey MLA (Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure)
Síle De Valera TD (Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands)	Martin McGuinness MP MLA (Minister of Education)
John O'Donoghue TD (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform)	Brid Rodgers MLA (Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development)
Micheál Martin TD (Minister for Health and Children)	
Frank Fahey TD (Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources)	
Éamon Ó Cuív (Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands)	
Liz O'Donnell (Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs)	

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