

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Meeting of Shadow North/South Ministerial Council

Parliament Buildings, Belfast, 1 December 1999

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1. The Government was represented at this first and only meeting of the Shadow North/South Ministerial Council by the Minister for Justice and Minister of State O'Donnell. The Northern Ireland transitional administration was represented by the First Minister (designate) and the Deputy First Minister (designate).

2. Sinn Féin had privately expressed some dissatisfaction at the absence of their Ministers from the Northern side: Trimble and Mallon both took the view that any additional attendance on the Northern side was unnecessary. However, we persuaded Sinn Féin that the issue was not worth pursuing, given the low-key, technical nature of the meeting, and the need to ensure that the focus was kept on the Inaugural Plenary.

3. The meeting was held to satisfy a legal requirement on our side that the Council meet in transitional or shadow form before the entry into force of the British-Irish Agreement in order formally to approve the six Implementation Bodies and the six co-operation areas. In the absence of a Shadow Executive, and thus of a Shadow Council, these were politically agreed on 18 December 1998 and the Implementation Bodies were subsequently the subject of the supplementary international agreement signed in Dublin on 8 March 1998, and of domestic legislation in the two jurisdictions. However, advice from the Attorney-General's Office was that a failure to meet the exact terms of the Agreement would entail some legal risk, given in particular that its entry into force would trigger the amendment of Articles 2 and 3.

4. The statement issued after the meeting, detailing the matters considered by the

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Council, is attached.

5. The atmosphere at the meeting was businesslike but cordial and relaxed, with Trimble welcoming and in particularly good form. There was no substantive discussion on any of the items, which had been agreed between officials in advance.

6. Trimble did, however, express some concern about the projected level of costs for the Inaugural Plenary (£100,000) and it was agreed that officials might look at ways to cut these. The date and venue (Armagh on Monday 13 December), the involvement of large teams of Ministers on both sides, and the agenda (attached) were all agreed.

7. The Northern side was advised that Tim O'Connor had been appointed by the Government as our Joint Secretary to the Council. Terry Smyth is acting Northern Joint Secretary, pending a full appointment.

Rory Montgomery
2 December 1999

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Meeting of North/South Ministerial Council in Transitional Form

Wednesday 1 December 1999

Statement

1. The North/South Ministerial Council met in transitional form at Parliament Buildings, Belfast on Wednesday 1 December 1999. The Irish Government was represented by Mr John O'Donoghue, TD, Minister for Justice, and by Ms Liz O'Donnell TD, Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Northern Ireland transitional administration was represented by Rt Hon David Trimble, MP, First Minister-designate, Mr Séamus Mallon, MP, Deputy First Minister-designate.

2. As required by paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand Two of the Multi-Party Agreement done at Belfast on 10 April 1998, the Council

   (a) agreed the following matters for co-operation through existing bodies in each separate jurisdiction:

   - Transport
   - Agriculture
   - Education
   - Health
   - Environment
   - Tourism.

   (b) agreed the following matters for co-operation through implementation bodies operating on a cross-border or all-island basis:

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- Inland Waterways
- Food Safety
- Trade and Business Development
- Special EU Programmes
- Language
- Aquaculture and Marine Matters.

3. The Council agreed that the functions and structures of the implementation bodies, and the common arrangements applying to them, should be as specified in the Agreement between the British and Irish Governments establishing Implementation Bodies done at Dublin on 8 March 1999.

4. The Council noted a draft Memorandum of Understanding on Procedure and agreed that it be brought forward for approval at the Inaugural Plenary Meeting of the Council.

5. Initial arrangements for the Council's standing joint Secretariat were agreed.

6. It was agreed that the Inaugural Plenary Meeting of the Council should take place in Armagh on Monday 13 December 1999.

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ANNEX B TO PAPER NSMC (T) 3

NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL - INAUGURAL MEETING

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Introductory/opening statements

2. Draft memorandum on procedural arrangements

3. Implementation Bodies - locations, and board members

4. Areas for co-operation

5. Future work arrangements, programme and meetings

6. Draft communiqué

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