

16/2000



**FROM: DOREEN BROWN**  
**23 FEBRUARY 2000**

**copy distribution below**

**SONYA KILPATRICK**

**NI BULLPOINTS**

1. You circulated the FCO Bullpoints document for updating by today.
2. I am not clear when the last version was produced; there are internal inconsistencies. For example, the section on Political Progress has been drafted post-devolution, in that it refers to power now being back in the hands of NI politicians for the first time in 25 years - whereas the section on Economic, Social and Cultural Issues pre-dates devolution, in that it refers to the policies being pursued by the British Government pending devolution of powers to a new NI Assembly.
3. Given the political events of the last 3 months, I believe strongly that the purpose and scope of the Bullpoints brief should be clarified. It is not enough simply to attempt to update a document month after month without having an appreciation of what it is meant to achieve overall.
4. I also have difficulty in working out the process which led to the choice of matters to be covered in the current brief. Why, for example, put in a section on education and not on health or industrial development or agriculture?
5. You asked me to update the sections on the NSMC and the BIC, although you also said that Robert Crawford would be willing to update the BIC. Again, I do not see it as a simple case of updating the current issues on a free-standing basis; instead, the whole section on the political institutions needs to be revamped in the light of suspension, from a political rather than an operational perspective. I would suggest that NIO's Political Directorate should do that.
6. If there is still considered to be a need to say something about the operation of the NSMC during the period of devolution and up to the current day, it would be sufficient to say something on the lines of the following:

"The North South Ministerial Council met in Armagh on 13 December 1999. Six Implementation Bodies were established and six further areas for cross-border co-operation (using existing bodies) were identified. Work began to move forward at sectoral level, with three sectoral meetings taking place before the suspension of devolution.

Mr Knox  
for info  
29/2  
ER  
W Rooney

You'll be interested to see  
-/turn 29/2

The suspension of devolution means that the North South Ministerial Council is inoperative. At present, however, the six Implementation Bodies remain in existence, and North/South co-operation through existing Departments can continue."

*(Signed Doreen Brown)*

**D A BROWN**  
**Ext 23410**

**cc**    **Mr McCusker**  
         **Mr Haire**  
         **Mrs Devlin**  
         **Mrs Flanagan**  
         **Mrs Cassells**  
         **Mr Beattie**  
         **Mrs Keenan**