

North/South Ministerial Council

Dick Mackenzie
Joint Secretary – North

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PS/FIRST MINISTER
PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

NSMC PLENARY – MARCH 2001

1. The next NSMC plenary is scheduled for 2nd March 2001 in Armagh, and I have been giving some thought to possible agenda items.
2. The shape of the agenda might be as set out in the Annex and I would appreciate a preliminary view from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on this so that we can begin the process of having relevant papers prepared.
3. After the last Plenary, both Ministers expressed the wish that at future meetings there should be the opportunity for more free ranging discussion rather than the orchestrated arrangement where all contributions are prepared beforehand. Further, the First Minister considered that it was not necessary to construct the proceedings in such a way that all Ministers were given the opportunity to talk – on subjects over which they did not have a direct responsibility.

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4. I have spoken to my Southern counterpart about this and his side apparently prefers a regulated agenda with prepared speeches.

5. I wonder if a middle way might be for the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister to propose a topic for the purpose of general Ministerial discussion at the Plenary. If this approach commended itself to Ministers, perhaps they could let me have some suggestions which I would discuss with the other Joint Secretary. Indeed after the last Plenary, the First Minister mentioned the possibility of a discussion on drugs. Another possibility might be a discussion on NSMC priorities for the next year.

SUMMARY

6. I should be grateful for a Ministerial steer on:-
- the draft agenda and whether any other items should be added; and
 - whether a general discussion should be added and what the topic might be.



DICK MACKENZIE
Joint Secretary

DRAFT AGENDA

- (1) Opening remarks by First Minister/Deputy First Minister/Taoiseach
- (2) NSMC Annual Report
- (3) Progress reports on: -
 - Implementation Bodies
 - Areas for Co-operation
 - Tourism Company
- (4) Draft Corporate Plan 2001 - 2003
- (5) Institutional Format – Report Back
- (6) Review of Sectoral Procedures
- (7) Review of Remuneration of Board Members of the North/South Implementation Bodies
- (8) Report of Working Group on North/South Consultative Forum
- (9) Report of Steering Group on Obstacles to North/South Mobility
- (10) Report of Trade and Business Development Body and Enterprise Departments on Competitiveness
- (11) [General discussion on selected topic, e.g. Drugs]
- (12) Date of next meeting
- (13) Draft Joint Communiqué.