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RESTRICTED – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

EC(M)(00)5

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:
WEDNESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2000

Present:

Deputy First Minister
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Minister of Education
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Minister of the Environment
Minister of Finance and Personnel
Minister of Higher Education, Training and
Employment
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public
Safety

In Attendance:

Secretary to the Executive Committee
Director, OFMDFM

Apologies for non-attendance were received from the First Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Chairman explained that, while the agenda for the meeting listed a number of papers for noting, this was not intended to preclude substantive discussion if any Minister so wished.

ITEM 1: MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING – EC(M)(00)4

- 4.1 The Executive Committee considered the wording of paragraph 1.3 of the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February. **The Committee approved the minutes subject to the paras below.** The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Minister of Education dissented from **approval of para 1.3.** ~~the acceptance by the remainder of the Committee of the accuracy of the wording, on the grounds that it the discussion at the previous meeting had not clarified the position on matters to be notified in~~

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~~advance to the Committee and the categories listed were not comprehensive.~~

- 1.2 It was agreed that the Secretariat should carry out further work to define the categories *in para 1.3* more closely, taking account of any views submitted by Ministers, and would put forward a paper for consideration at a future meeting.

- 1.3 The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety queried the accuracy of ~~the wording of~~ paragraph 3.3 of the Minutes. With the exception of the Minister of Education, who did not express a view, the remainder of the Committee accepted the *paragraph* as accurate.

- 1.4 Paragraph 4.2 of the Minutes was amended to read "The Committee agreed the need for papers to be produced in advance of all sectoral meetings so that the Executive Committee as a whole, and accompanying Ministers in particular, could be aware of the issues involved and any decisions expected."

Matters Arising

- 1.5 The Minister of the Environment sought clarification from the **Ministerial Code** on the appropriateness of Ministers asking Questions in the Assembly of other Ministers. It was confirmed that this was not an acceptable practice, and the ~~Executive Committee~~ Secretariat would **draft** a suitable amendment to the Ministerial Code *for consideration*.

- ~~1.6 The Minister of Education reported that he had notified the First Minister and deputy First Minister in advance of his announcement of the schools capital programme.~~

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- 1.7 The Minister of Education undertook to pursue a query from the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure in relation to an announcement about **Irish-medium education**.
- 1.8 The Chairman confirmed that details of the financial consequences of the **Equality Bill** had not yet been circulated to the Executive Committee.
- 1.9 The Chairman reported the receipt of correspondence from the Minister for Regional Development on **Belfast Harbour**. *The First Minister and the Deputy First Minister would reply stating that* the matter *should* be referred to the Executive Committee *before conclusions were reached*. ~~for full consideration of the cross-cutting issues involved.~~ It was agreed that the Options Paper *produced by the Minister for Regional Development* on the sale of Belfast Port would be placed on the agenda for an early meeting of the Committee.
- 1.10 It was agreed that the Secretariat should circulate to all Ministers the written input which each Minister had made *in response to the initial request for material to be used in* ~~to the process~~ of devising the **Programme of Government**.
- 1.11 The Chairman reported that a legal view had been received on aspects of the **Planning Compensation Bill** but further discussions would be required with the Department of the Environment *before the matter was considered by the Committee*.

ITEM 2: STRUCTURAL FUNDS - EC(00)25

- 2.1 The Minister of Finance and Personnel presented EC(00)25 which had been produced to resolve some outstanding issues and concerns from the

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two previous discussions of Structural Funds papers and to establish a position on which to base negotiations with the European Commission.

2.2 Work undertaken since the last meeting had produced greater clarity in some areas, and the paper **included the option of** further adjustment to the financial allocations to promote social inclusion.

2.2 The Committee expressed broad support for the thrust of the paper. A number of further points were, however, raised in relation to specific elements in, or exclusions from, the proposals which Ministers asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to consider further.

2.3 The Committee agreed:

- that negotiations should be taken forward on the basis outlined in the paper;
- that **the** £10m should be transferred from transport infrastructure to education and social development;
- that the Minister of Finance and Personnel should reflect on the views put forward by Ministers;
- that consultation would take place with the social partners;
- that arrangements should be devised to enable the Committee to monitor spending by Departments on social inclusion, on cross-border development, on **the economic impact of expenditure** and on the extent to which local delivery mechanisms were used. A paper on how this might be achieved would be put to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting;
- that the Executive Committee would hold a further discussion before the negotiations were concluded;
- that the Assembly would be informed of developments at the appropriate stages.

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ITEM 3: DRUGS – EC(00)26

- 3.1 The Chairman outlined the options put forward in EC(00)26 for the future co-ordination of the NI Drugs Strategy.
- 3.2 The Executive Committee agreed the recommended option whereby the Central Co-ordinating Group would be chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety taking the lead on behalf of the Executive in a higher level group involving relevant Ministers, including the NIO Minister.

ITEM 4: NEW TSN

- 4.1 The Chairman reported that a paper on New TSN had not yet been agreed with the First Minister for consideration by the Executive Committee.

ITEM 5: NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Education Sectoral Meeting

- 5.1 The Minister of Education reported on the Education Sectoral Meeting which he had attended with Mr Nesbitt on 3 February. A written report had been circulated to members of the Executive Committee, and a statement would be made to the Assembly as soon as possible.
- 5.2 The Minister of Education confirmed that Mr Michael Walker had been appointed to the Food Safety Promotion Board.

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Food Safety and Health Co-operation Sectoral Meeting

- 5.2 The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety reported on the Food Safety and Health Co-operation Sectoral Meeting which she had attended with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on 4 February. A written report was circulated **at the meeting** to members of the Executive Committee, together with a copy of the statement which would be made to the Assembly.

ITEM 6: EU AND NIO CONCORDATS – EC(00)28

- 6.1 The Executive Committee agreed the EU and NIO Concordats as amended.

ITEM 7: STUDENT ACCESS – EC(00)29

- 7.1 The Committee noted the paper from the Minister of Further and Higher Education, Education and Training.

ITEM 8: CORPORATE IDENTITY – EC(00)30

- 8.1 The Committee agreed that design companies should be invited to put forward their proposals for a corporate logo free of charge, and that action should also be taken to encourage innovative ideas from young people.

ITEM 9: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – EC(00)31

- 9.1 The Executive Committee agreed that the current GB Bill should extend to NI but that further consultation should be carried out on the desirability of bringing forward separate NI legislation for the future.

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**ITEM 10: COMPACT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE VOLUNTARY
SECTOR – EC(00)32**

- 10.1 The Committee endorsed the application of the Compact throughout government and agreed the preparation of an implementation strategy.

ITEM 11: LEGISLATION MEMORANDA

Deregulation (Weights and Measures) Bill – EC(00)34

Trustee Amendment Bill – EC(00)35

- 11.1 The Executive Committee agreed the proposals for a Weights and Measures Bill. It also endorsed the Trustee Amendment Bill for introduction in the Assembly.

ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 12.1 The date for the next meeting of the Executive Committee was agreed as Tuesday 15 February at 10.00 am.

ITEM 13: DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

- 13.1 A draft press release was circulated and agreed for issue.

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