



NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

MEETING IN INSTITUTIONAL FORMAT

**BALLYMASCANLON, CO LOUTH
TUESDAY 30 OCTOBER 2007**

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The second meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in Institutional Format was held in the Ballymascanlon Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth on Tuesday 30 October 2007.
2. The Irish Government was represented by Dermot Ahern TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Dr Ian Paisley MP MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MP MLA, Junior Minister Ian Paisley MLA and Minister of Education, Caitríona Ruane MLA.
3. At the meeting, Ministers expressed their regret at the decision of Seagate to close its plant at Limavady. They recognised that because Seagate's workforce at Limavady comes from a wide area on a cross-border basis, Seagate's decision will have serious implications for both the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government. They agreed to co-operate closely in the coming weeks in their efforts to address the situation. They welcomed the announcement of three hundred new jobs in Norbrook Laboratories in Newry.

BOARDS OF THE NORTH/SOUTH BODIES

4. The Council noted that the terms of office of the Boards of the North South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited will expire in December 2007 and requested that work be taken forward to ensure that the NSMC can put new Boards in place by November 2007.

5. The Council expressed its appreciation of the work and the commitment of the outgoing Chairs, Vice Chairs and Board members of the North South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited.

EUROPEAN UNION MATTERS

6. The Council welcomed the opportunity to consider the EU dimension of its work and agreed to consider this further at its next Plenary meeting.

OBSTACLES TO CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

7. The Council noted progress on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Study of Obstacles to Mobility commissioned by the NSMC, including: progress on the mutual recognition of qualifications, including in the education and health areas; the introduction of single tariffs by some mobile phone operators; and the greater availability of public service information for people who wish to cross the border to live, work and study.
8. The Council launched the Cross-Border Mobility Website (www.crossbordermobility.info) which provides a central access point for information on a range of issues for people who wish to move across the border to live, work and study. The Council requested the Secretariat to keep the website's operation, development, marketing and management under review and to examine options for its future funding, including possible EU funding, and report back to a future NSMC meeting.
9. The Council agreed that the NSMC Secretariat should convene two working groups – one to explore options for going forward on the transfer of pension rights on a cross-border basis and the other to examine cross-border banking issues, including transaction charges. Both groups will report back to a future NSMC meeting.

NEW ACCOMMODATION FOR NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT

10. The Council noted the progress to date in acquiring permanent accommodation for the NSMC Joint Secretariat in Armagh.
11. The Council agreed that once evaluation of the short-listed bidders is completed, subject to the appropriate internal processes in each administration, officials should enter into contractual negotiations with the preferred bidder to provide leased accommodation and report progress to a future NSMC meeting.

NORTH SOUTH IMPLEMENTATION BODIES AND TOURISM IRELAND LTD – HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

12. The Council discussed a number of human resource issues in the North South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Ltd., including the regrading of posts and pay issues raised in a paper prepared by the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the Bodies.
13. The Council agreed that officials from the Department of Finance and the Department of Finance and Personnel will advise their Ministers of the issues and consider the CEO Pay Paper together with the additional information provided by the Bodies, in the context of relevant national pay policies. Conclusions will be reported to a future NSMC meeting.
14. The Council agreed a Framework for the approval of regrading of certain posts in the North South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited. It agreed that providing the principles set out in the Framework are adhered to, the approval of NSMC to such regradings can be deemed to have been given.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15. The Council noted that progress in all of the matters discussed at today's Institutional meeting will be reported to the next NSMC Plenary and agreed that the Council will meet again in Institutional format as appropriate in 2008.

**Joint Secretariat
30 October 2007**