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NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

FOURTH INSTITUTIONAL MEETING

FARMLEIGH HOUSE, DUBLIN

28 APRIL 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The fourth meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in Institutional format was held in Farmleigh House, Dublin on 28 April 2009.
2. The Irish Government was represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, TD, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by the First Minister, The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA, the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MP MLA, Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA, and Margaret Ritchie MLA.
3. Ministers had a broad discussion of the current economic downturn and the budgetary challenges facing the two jurisdictions.

OBSTACLES TO CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

4. The Council welcomed the progress made in the development, marketing and management of the Border People website which provides access to high quality public service information for people who cross the border to live, work or study. It noted that the website is attracting approximately 10,000 visits per month. The Council noted that funding for the further development of the website for the 3-year period 2009-2011 has been secured under INTERREG

IVA. The NSMC Joint Secretariat will keep the website's future development under review.

5. On cross-border banking issues, the Council noted the positive outcome of discussions held with a wide range of interested groups, including business and consumer organisations and the main banking institutions on the issue of cross-border banking charges. It noted that these discussions have resulted in the publication, for the first time, of a detailed comparative table of the cost of typical cross-border transaction charges on the Border People website www.borderpeople.info and the transparency which this now provides for consumers.
6. The Council noted that many of the banking groups have either implemented, or are in the process of implementing, new IT platforms which can result in reduced cross border transaction fees and that the implementation of the EU Single European Payments Directive and the EU Payment Services Directive should reduce the future cost of cross-border transactions.
7. On the transfer of pension rights on a cross-border basis, the Council noted that a number of possible options had been identified. Given the cost implications and the current economic climate, the Council agreed that reciprocal membership arrangements of the Transfer Network and the Transfer Club pension schemes in the respective jurisdictions is not a viable option at this time.
8. The Council, however, also noted that recent changes in pension arrangements are likely to be helpful in enabling the transfer of the value of accrued pension entitlements from one jurisdiction to the other.
9. The Council agreed that measures should be taken to provide additional information on pension issues to teachers and others in the public sector who wish to transfer to work in the other jurisdiction. It asked the NSMC Joint Secretariat, in conjunction with Finance Departments and key stakeholders, to develop a plan to address the matter which should include information on recent changes in pension arrangements.

NORTH SOUTH IMPLEMENTATION BODIES AND TOURISM IRELAND LTD HR ISSUES

10. The Council noted that the two Finance Departments have considered pay and human resource issues raised by the Chief Executives of the North South Bodies and have concluded that there is no justification for changing the Bodies' pay structures. The Finance Departments will, however, continue to consider and address specific human resources issues raised by the Bodies.
11. The Council noted that the two Finance Departments are also examining a number of other human resource issues in the Bodies and that a report will be presented to the North South Ministerial Council as soon as possible.

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT ISSUES

12. The Council noted that construction work on the new permanent headquarters for the North South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat will begin in Armagh in the coming weeks with an envisaged completion date in early 2010. It also noted that the NSMC Annual Report for 2008 will be published on the website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org before the end of April 2009.

EU MATTERS RAISED WITHIN NSMC

13. The Council noted the work on EU related matters, in accordance with the Work Programmes, in the relevant NSMC sectoral formats since May 2007.

**Joint Secretariat
28 April 2009**