



NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

THIRD PLENARY MEETING

DUBLIN, 30 NOVEMBER 2001

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The third Plenary meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council was held in Dublin Castle on 30 November 2001.
2. The Irish Government Delegation was led by the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, TD, who chaired the meeting, and by the Tánaiste, Ms Mary Harney TD. The Northern Ireland Administration delegation was led by the Rt. Hon. David Trimble, MP, MLA, First Minister and Mr. Mark Durkan, MLA, Deputy First Minister. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. The Council expressed its satisfaction at recent positive developments in regard to the implementation of all aspects of the Belfast Agreement of Good Friday 1998.
4. The Council reviewed the programme of co-operation which it oversees and took decisions about a number of specific proposals.

NSMC Annual Report Year 2000

5. The Council noted the Annual Report on the activities of the North/South Ministerial Council from its establishment in December 1999 to 31 December 2000. This Report will be published shortly.

Progress Report on the work of the North/South Ministerial Council in its Sectoral Format

6. The Council also received a progress report on the work of the NSMC at meetings in Sectoral Format since January 2001. The Council noted with satisfaction the progress that has been made in implementing the work programme set out at the first Plenary meeting of the NSMC in December 1999. Both sides looked forward to continued progress being made in these areas to mutual benefit.

Future Programme of NSMC Meetings

7. The Council considered and approved a schedule of NSMC meetings to take place over the coming months. It is planned that the Council will hold a first meeting in Institutional Format before the end of December 2001.

Study on the establishment of an Independent North/South Consultative Forum

8. The Council received a progress report on work done by the Working Group established to take forward this study. The Council noted that more work was to be undertaken and agreed that further discussions on the issue take place at the forthcoming Institutional Format meeting with a further progress report to be made at the next Plenary.

Study on Obstacles to Cross-Border Mobility on the island of Ireland

9. The Council received a report from the consultants engaged to carry out this study. The Council noted the work done by the Joint Steering Group and the report produced by the consultants. It agreed that the two administrations would not offer a view on the conclusions at this stage, pending publication of the report which is due shortly, to allow interested organisations, including Government Departments and individuals the opportunity to present their views on the recommendations and their implementation.
10. The Council also agreed that the present Steering Group would manage the consultation exercise and bring forward to the next NSMC Plenary, a paper summarising, evaluating and costing the recommendations in light

of the outcome of the consultation, and reaching conclusions, including on implementation proposals where appropriate. Finally the Council agreed that the Steering Group should ensure that, in considering proposals, care should be taken to avoid creating barriers to East West mobility and that the proposals should avoid creating unjustified advantage for cross-border workers beyond that available in the respective jurisdictions.

Budgetary Provisions for North/South Bodies

11. The Council agreed an opinion on the budgets for the North/South Bodies for the period 2002-2004. The NSMC envisages that the total to be spent by the six Bodies in 2002 will be some Stg.£54.37m/€92.07m. The respective contributions to this amount will be Stg.£40.01m/ €67.74m from the Irish Government and Stg.£14.37m/ €24.33m from the Northern Ireland Administration. The details of the budgets for the Bodies will be considered further as part of the processes for planning public expenditure in both jurisdictions.

Competitiveness

12. The Council received a report on enhancing competitiveness in the two economies which was commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, working in conjunction with InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body. The Council noted the content and findings of the report and that the conclusions covered a broad spectrum of work across a range of administrative functions. The Council requested that the relevant Government Departments and Agencies pursue the competitiveness agenda, to mutual economic benefit, in the areas for which they have responsibility.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, National Development Plan and Programme for Government

13. The Council noted the current position with regard to the Irish Government's Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and its National Development Plan and the devolved administration's draft Programme for Government which is due to be debated by the Assembly early next month.

Effects of Events of 11 September

14. There was also a discussion of the effect on the economies of both jurisdictions of the horrific events of 11 September. The economic effect on both parts of the island of the events was noted and discussed. The Council agreed that their aftermath poses significant challenges for the

economies of both jurisdictions. The Council considered how the tourism agencies on the island of Ireland are developing proposals to reduce the impact on tourism.

15. There was also a discussion of emergency planning in the light of the events of 11 September. It was agreed that there is a need for continued cross border co-operation in the health area and the structures in place in each jurisdiction with respect to planning for major incidents.

Next Meeting

16. The Council agreed that its next meeting in Plenary format would be in Northern Ireland in May 2002.

**Joint Secretariat
30 November 2001**

ANNEX A

**MEETING OF THE NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
DUBLIN CASTLE - 30 NOVEMBER 2001**

MINISTERS ATTENDING

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive
Bertie Ahern TD (Taoiseach)	Rt. Hon David Trimble MP MLA (First Minister)
Mary Harney TD (Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment)	Mark Durkan MLA (Deputy First Minister and Minister of Finance and Personnel)
Michael Woods TD (Minister for Education and Science)	Bairbre de Brún MLA (Minister of Health, Social Services & Public Safety)
Mary O'Rourke TD (Minister for Public Enterprise)	Sir Reg Empey MLA (Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment)
Brian Cowen TD (Minister for Foreign Affairs)	Seán Farren MLA (Minister of Employment and Learning)
Noel Dempsey TD (Minister for the Environment and Local Government)	Sam Foster MLA (Minister of the Environment)
Dermot Ahern TD (Minister for Social, Community & Family Affairs)	Michael McGimpsey MLA (Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure)
Síle De Valera TD (Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands)	Martin McGuinness MP MLA (Minister of Education)
John O'Donoghue TD (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform)	Bríd Rodgers MLA (Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development)
James McDaid TD (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation)	
Micheál Martin TD (Minister for Health and Children)	
Liz O'Donnell TD (Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs)	
Mary Coughlan TD (Minister of State of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands)	