



NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

FARMLEIGH HOUSE, DUBLIN

6 JULY 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighth plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at Farmleigh House, Dublin on 6 July 2009.
2. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen TD. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA and the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MP MLA. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. Ministers had a broad discussion of the economic challenges facing them and their respective responses to dealing with the downturn and its impact, particularly on the banking sectors in both jurisdictions. The Irish Government outlined its intention to establish a National Asset Management Agency. It was agreed that there would be an early meeting of the two Finance Ministers to discuss these issues.
4. The Council noted the contribution of continuing practical and mutually beneficial North South cooperation to assisting both administrations in their efforts to promote growth and employment

NSMC PROGRESS REPORT

5. The Council noted a report on key developments in the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) through the nine NSMC meetings held since

the last Plenary in January 2009 and welcomed the progress made including:

- the close co-operation on the recent Influenza A/H1N1 outbreak;
- agreement on a framework for the removal of waste illegally dumped in Northern Ireland;
- progress on introducing the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications later this year and developing a co-ordinated approach to the introduction of lower blood alcohol limits;
- intensified co-operation on Child Protection, including internet safety, the development of a protocol for the movement for vulnerable children and families across borders and advice and guidance on safeguarding arrangements for parents, carers and employers;
- progress on suicide prevention including proposals for revised media guidelines to incorporate advice on new technologies including internet related suicides;
- the development of a draft all-island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy to facilitate free movement of animals including plans for a cross-border event in the Autumn 2009 to bring together key stakeholders to discuss the delivery of the Strategy;
- a joint programme of research commissioned by the Loughs Agency which has played a leading role in the development of a Europe-wide research project on use of genetic techniques to identify origins of salmon caught at sea (SALSEA);
- continued co-operation in education on the approaches to the integration of newcomer children in schools;
- the further development of the www.borderpeople.info website, the publication by the main banks of information on the cost of cross-border transactions and progress on the transfer of pension rights on a cross-border basis.

6. The Council also discussed progress in relation to the achieving of efficiency savings in the Business Plans of the North South Bodies and Tourism Ireland and noted the need for early decisions on this matter.

PROGRESS ON A5 AND A8 ROADS PROJECTS

7. The Council welcomed the good progress on the A5 (Aughnacloy to the North West) and A8 (Belfast to Larne) road projects and noted that an important milestone, confirmation of the preferred routes, is expected to be announced shortly. They, therefore, agreed that payment of €9m will be made by the Minister for Transport to the NI Consolidated Fund before the end of 2009, in accordance with an agreed payments procedure. The Council agreed to consider a further progress report at the next NSMC Plenary.

ST ANDREWS AGREEMENT REVIEW

8. The Council noted that the Review Group is continuing its consideration of the report of the experts/advisers on efficiency and value for money of the existing Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited.
9. The Council confirmed its intention to conclude the St Andrews Review process before the end of 2009 and it instructed the Review Group to accelerate its work on all the elements of the Review and to provide a final report to the next meeting of the Plenary.
10. The Council confirmed its intention, on the conclusion of the Review, to refer the recommendations emerging from the Review process to the relevant Departments North and South for their consideration and appropriate action, mindful that any changes to the existing arrangements would require the specific endorsement of the Assembly and Oireachtas.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

11. The Council noted the Northern Ireland Executive's ongoing review of the Civic Forum and agreed to bring to an early conclusion discussions on the North South Consultative Forum.
12. It recalled that the Irish Government made a proposal on a North South Consultative Forum to the Northern Ireland Executive, following the conclusion of its consultations with social partners and other groups from civic society in 2008.

NORTH SOUTH PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

13. The Council welcomed the establishment of two working groups, by the Oireachtas and the Northern Assembly respectively, to progress discussions on the establishment of a North South Parliamentary Forum. It noted that agreement to establish a Forum is a matter for the Northern

Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas respectively and agreed to review progress at the next NSMC Plenary.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

14. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings to take place over the coming months and agreed that its next meeting in Plenary format, will be hosted by the Executive in November/December 2009.

**Joint Secretariat
6 July 2009**

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL FARMLEIGH, DUBLIN – 6 JULY 2009

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive
Brian Cowen TD Taoiseach	Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA First Minister
Mary Coughlan TD Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Martin McGuinness MP MLA deputy First Minister
Brian Lenihan TD Minister for Finance	Michelle Gildernew MP MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Noel Dempsey TD Minister for Transport	Caitríona Ruane MLA Minister for Education
Micheál Martin TD Minister for Foreign Affairs	Conor Murphy MP MLA Minister for Regional Development
Éamon Ó Cuív TD Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Margaret Ritchie MLA Minister for Social Development
Mary Hanafin TD Minister for Social and Family Affairs	Robin Newton MLA OFMDFM Junior Minister
John Gormley TD Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government	Gerry Kelly MLA OFMDFM Junior Minister
Eamon Ryan TD Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	
Brendan Smith TD Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	
Batt O’Keeffe TD Minister for Education and Science	