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NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES SECTORAL FORMAT

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, DUBLIN

8 SEPTEMBER 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The ninth North South Ministerial Council meeting in Special EU Programmes sectoral format was held in Government Buildings, Dublin on 8 September 2009.
2. The meeting was attended by Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Finance Sammy Wilson MP, MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel, and Junior Minister Gerry Kelly, MLA. Minister Lenihan chaired the meeting.

Progress Report

3. The Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), Mr Pat Colgan, reported that the PEACE II and INTERREG IIIA Programmes have met all of their annual expenditure targets up to 2007.
4. Ministers noted that the SEUPB has put implementation structures in place to provide practical advice to potential project applications to INTERREG IVB and IVC.
5. The Council noted progress made on the development of the PEACE Network to share the experiences of Peace funding;

PEACE III Programme

6. The aim of the PEACE III Programme is to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promote reconciliation. It will promote social and economic stability in Northern Ireland and the Border Region by supporting actions to promote cohesion between communities. The Council noted progress made on the Programme implementation and on the number of projects already approved, ie 241 applications to date, 104 of which have been approved. These approved projects have a combined budget of €155.9 million, or 47 per cent of the total PEACE III budget (€333 million).
7. The Council noted that the first 55 projects under Theme 1.2. Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past, with its special focus on victims and survivors, have been approved. Ministers also noted that SEUPB has proactively engaged in outreach measures with under-represented groups, including the Protestant community, to ensure that all communities participate fully in the programme.
8. The Foyle Footbridge project, worth over £13m, was the first projects approved. In addition, funding of almost £5m has been provided to the Derry/Strabane/Omagh PEACE III cluster for the purpose of delivering six Strategic Priorities for the North West in 2009-2010.
9. The Council noted the approval of 14 Local PEACE Action Plans from Local Authority clusters, with a combined allocation of over €55m, and looked forward to their implementation.

INTERREG IVA (Northern Ireland/Ireland/Scotland) Programme

10. The Cross Border INTERREG IVA Programme (Northern Ireland/Ireland/Scotland) aims to support strategic cross-border co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable region. The Council noted the progress made on the Programme implementation in terms of projects approved, i.e. 34. These approved projects have a combined budget of €150.9 million, or 59 per cent of the total Programme budget (€256 million).
11. The Kelvin project, an ICT infrastructure initiative to enhance broadband connectivity in the North West, was the first infrastructure project approved by the INTERREG IVA Steering Committee and is worth €30m.
12. Ministers also noted the full participation of local authority based groups in the Programme. The Cross Border Groups of Local Authorities (East Border Region, Irish Central Border Area Network and North West Region Cross Border Group) fulfilled an important role in managing funds in the previous INTERREG IIIA Programme. Two groups of Northern Ireland Local Authorities – COMET and the North East – also participated in INTERREG IIIA. The INTERREG IVA Programme will build on the successes and competences of these

groups. Funding has therefore been made available to all five in respect of enterprise, tourism and collaboration.

13. The Council noted Scotland's full participation in the Programme. To date, 13 projects with Scottish partners have been approved.

SEUPB Business Plan and Budget 2009

14. The Council discussed the Special EU Programmes Body Business Plan and budget, including the need for efficiencies.

SEUPB 2007 and 2008 Annual Report and Accounts

15. The Council noted the Special EU Programmes Body Annual Report and Accounts for 2007 and for 2008.

Next Meeting

16. The Council agreed to meet again in the Special EU Programmes sectoral format in January/February 2010.

**Joint Secretariat
8 September 2009**