

## **JMC Communiqué - Plenary 8 June 2010**

A Plenary session of the Joint Ministerial Committee was held in London today.

The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister, David Cameron MP. The participants were the following: from HM Government the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg MP, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Moore MP, the Secretary of State for Wales, Cheryl Gillan MP, the Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Hugo Swire MP and the Commercial Secretary to the Treasury, Lord Sassoon; from the Scottish Government the First Minister, Alex Salmond MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney MSP, and the Minister for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP; from the Northern Ireland Executive, the First Minister, Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MP MLA; and from the Welsh Assembly Government the First Minister, Carwyn Jones AM and the Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones AM. This was the first meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee since the formation of the new UK Government.

The meeting discussed: the mutual respect agenda and how the four administrations could work together to make this a reality; the economy and public finances and intergovernmental relations.

It confirmed the continuing importance of the institution of the Joint Ministerial Committee and agreed a programme of meetings for the year ahead.

On the economy, Ministers discussed the impact of the recession on their administrations and of the planned expenditure cuts affecting each administration. They agreed that all four administrations had a shared commitment to protecting the economy and to responsible management of public finances. They also identified shared interests in encouraging sustainable economic growth and achieving the best value provision of public services, especially as resources get tighter. Maintaining and improving competitiveness was also agreed to be a priority.

They agreed that it would be important to maintain regular dialogue on these issues and that an early meeting of the Finance Ministers' Quadrilateral should take place.

The meeting also agreed the attached Annual Report, summarising the activities of the Joint Ministerial Committee since the last meeting of the Plenary in September 2009. This will now be published on each administration's website.

The Finance Ministers' Quadrilateral meetings will discuss the spending review and ensure that the devolved administrations are fully consulted.

## **JMC Annual Report 2009-2010**

### **Introduction**

The Joint Ministerial Committee is the apex of formal relations between HM Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. Arrangements for the JMC are set out in the Memorandum of Understanding, which can be found at [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/devolution), and was most recently agreed between the four administrations on 10 March 2010. This was presented to the four legislatures shortly thereafter.

This document sets out the meetings of the JMC and its sub-committees since the last meeting of JMC in its plenary format on 16 September 2009 and will be published on the websites of the four administrations. A wide range of other bilateral and quadrilateral fora have also met in this time.

### **Key milestones**

#### JMC Plenary

The Joint Ministerial Committee last met in plenary format on 16 September 2009, and discussed the economy, with particular reference to the meeting of the G20 the following week in Pittsburgh, and inter-administration relations.

#### Domestic policy discussions

The JMC (Domestic) met on 10 March 2010 to discuss inter-governmental relations and skills policy.

- The discussion on inter-governmental relations led to Ministers agreeing a revised Memorandum of Understanding between the four administrations, with:
  - i. A new protocol on dispute avoidance and resolution.
  - ii. Changes to the Concordat on the Co-ordination of European Policy, which relate to the workings of the Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe) and the role of the Devolved Administrations' EU offices in Brussels.
  - iii. Changes to the Concordat on International Relations, which relate to the responsibilities of the Devolved Administrations in connection with international obligations and their relationship with international organisations.
- Ministers from the four administrations discussed their approaches to skills policy during the economic downturn. They agreed to convene a quadrilateral meeting on skills with Ministers from the four administrations.

#### Preparation for European Councils

The JMC (Europe) has met on three occasions since the JMC (Plenary) in September 2009, to discuss current EU business in which the Devolved Administrations have an interest and to allow the Devolved Administrations to contribute to HM Government's negotiating stance prior to European Councils. The JMC(Europe) met on the following occasions:

19 October 2009, and discussed:

- Priorities for the October European Council
  - Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty
  - Climate Financing
  - Fiscal exit strategies
- UK/DA coordination and horizon scan
  - Institutional changes to subsidiarity following ratification of the Lisbon Treaty
- A review of the workings of JMC(E)

1 December 2009, and discussed:

- Update on informal European Council
  - Engagement with new Commissioners-designate in new Commission
- Priorities for the December European Council
  - Economic and financial issues
  - Climate change
  - The Stockholm Work Programme on Justice and Home Affairs
- UK/DA coordination and horizon scan
  - Devolved Administrations EU priorities
  - Subsidiarity
- Common Fisheries Policy

16 March 2010, and discussed:

- Priorities for the Spring European Council
  - Europe 2020
  - Climate change
- UK/DA coordination and horizon scan

#### Discussions of the economy and public finances

Of the number of quadrilateral fora which complement the JMC structures, the key forum for engagement on economic and financial matters is the Finance Ministers' Quadrilateral. There was a meeting of the Finance Ministers Quadrilateral in Cardiff on 14 January 2010. The meeting considered the economy, the public service efficiency agenda and funding issues of common interest.