

# **British-Irish Council Tenth Summit, Dublin, 14 February 2008**

## **Communiqué**

The British-Irish Council (BIC), established under the Agreement reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations in Belfast in 1998, held its tenth Summit meeting today at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, in Dublin, Ireland.

The heads of delegations were welcomed by the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD. The British Government delegation was led by the Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy MP, the Secretary of State for Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM and the Scottish Government by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MP MSP. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Dr Ian R K Paisley MP MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MP, MLA.

The Government of Guernsey was represented by the Chief Minister, Deputy Mike Torode and the Government of Jersey was represented by Chief Minister, Senator Frank Walker. The Isle of Man Government was represented by the Chief Minister, Tony Brown MHK.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

The BIC is a forum for its members to exchange information, discuss, consult and to agree as they see fit on co-operative measures in areas of mutual interest to them.

### **Misuse of Drugs - Families and Drugs Misuse: Challenges and Opportunities**

Problem drug use is a complex and difficult issue affecting all Member Administrations and was a particular focus for the Summit discussion.

Misuse of drugs can have a devastating effect on the family. The Heads of Administrations discussed the importance of supporting families to overcome the problems they face and the role families can play in the rehabilitation process.

They reflected on the impacts of problem drug use on families and how these could be used in administrations' development of their drugs and/or alcohol strategies. They discussed the need to further develop advice and guidance for families, and to improve support to families in dealing with drugs treatment and rehabilitation processes. They recognised the importance of strategies to reduce the potential harm to the children of problem drug users. The Council also considered ways to utilise the potential of families as agents for drug use recovery.

The Council agreed to include a renewed focus on the families of problem drug users in any future drugs strategies prepared, with a view to providing increased support to those families and to better harness their potential to facilitate life improvements for problem drug users.

## **Strategic Review of the Council**

Recognising the potential for the BIC to strengthen relations between its members the Council welcomed the interim report of the Strategic Review.

They noted the progress to date including the consensus that a standing secretariat be a single, co-located model. The Council tasked the Secretariat, in liaison with the Member Administrations, to proceed with further detailed work on the governance, staffing, location, costing and funding of a standing secretariat.

They noted the current work of the Council, and agreed to further consideration by Member Administrations which takes into account the review of the existing work sectors and possible new areas.

The First Minister for Wales reported that early years policy is a wide ranging area, touching on issues of education, social care, children's rights, social inclusion and economic advantage. While there is considerable diversity across the BIC administrations to the approach to early years, through sharing of policy, practice and research there could be a shared commitment to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life.

The Scottish First Minister highlighted key goals and challenges in energy faced by all Member Administrations. These include the need to reduce emissions, to ensure security of energy supplies by fostering a diverse and competitive energy market, and to deliver energy at a price that is affordable for individuals and businesses.

The First Minister and the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland reported to the Council on a debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly on child protection. The Council agreed that child protection was a vitally important matter and that it was essential to build on the existing arrangements which currently exist between the Member Administrations, and to consider how child protection measures could be further developed through enhanced collaboration and co-operation.

The Council agreed that officials should consider the inclusion of early years policy, energy and child protection, including the growing problem of suicide among young people within its work programme, and how best these should be led, in the course of the current review of BIC.

The Council noted the current working methods of the BIC and agreed that this matter should be considered further to facilitate effective and dynamic working arrangements, and to explore methods to raise the profile of the Council including the development of the BIC website.

The Council tasked the Secretariat, in liaison with Member Administrations, to report back with the final recommendations at the next Summit in Scotland.

The Council noted the ongoing work of the BIC and the progress across the range of work sectors, and looked forward to a full and active programme of work for the coming year. The Council noted the recent meeting of Environment Ministers on 1 February and welcomed plans for a number of Ministerial meetings in other sectors in the first half of 2008. The Council noted, in

particular, the progress in the following areas:

### **Misuse of Drugs**

In addition to the focus on families and drugs misuse, the BIC, led by Ireland, has successfully carried out four full work programmes, and the recent topics discussed included:

- Homelessness and drugs use;
- Integrated Substance Misuse Assessment Tools;
- Co-ordination of drugs strategies within the BIC forum, and
- Treatment and Rehabilitation.

Work has also focused on the challenges presented by cocaine use which requires a high priority in administrations to tackle supply and demand factors, and where there is much that can be learned from sharing experiences in this area.

### **Environment**

This work sector, led by the UK, held its eighth Ministerial meeting on 1 February in Bangor, Northern Ireland. Environment Ministers agreed on the future work programmes of Climate Change Adaptation and Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Ministers also agreed to a number of new proposals including waste management, and the fishing-for-litter initiative which aims to address the negative impacts of marine litter. The ninth BIC Environment Ministerial meeting will take place in Jersey in 2009.

### **Knowledge Economy**

The BIC is currently taking forward work on the sustainability of businesses in the context of potential serious threats, such as criminal attacks or natural disasters, with the particular focus on small to medium sized enterprises. Possible preventative measures and business continuity planning are being developed to strengthen business sustainability through a common set of best practice guidelines, which will include a short and meaningful statement defining business continuity, and specific information for each Member Administrations.

### **Social Inclusion**

The issue of child poverty with a focus on lone parents is being examined, more specifically on transition points in peoples' lives and the proper provision of support at these times. The BIC is also looking at how Member Administrations identify and take into account, the views of lone parents, young people and children when formulating their policies. A final report on this work will be presented at the BIC Social Inclusion Ministerial meeting later in the year in Cardiff.

### **Tourism**

BIC's tourism work sector has completed several projects, including a model to measure the economic impact of tourism in the regions and training programmes for staff working in the sector. A review of the future work and direction of this work sector will be presented at the next Tourism Ministerial meeting.

### **eHealth**

In the field of e-Health, the BIC has exchanged experience and practice on:

- Factors driving the development of telemedicine – policy/technology;

- Interoperability and technical standards;
- Clinical governance and accountability;
- Security and confidentiality;
- The quality of telemedicine information online, and
- Education and training.

The BIC is continuing work on interoperability in telemedicine, a clinical governance framework and quality assurance of information from the internet. This work has made a very positive contribution to evaluations of clinical, educational and organisational impacts and health outcomes within the BIC Member Administrations.

With recent developments in the field of e-Health, the EU has become increasingly active in this area and has begun to look at the work of the BIC in this field. As a result, the BIC has decided to focus its work on clinical governance and information sharing issues around telecare and home telehealth.

### **Transport**

All parties remain committed to introducing as soon as possible the arrangements for the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications between Ireland and the UK. In addition work is underway on potential areas for UK/Ireland co-operation for mutual recognition of lesser infringements of road traffic law, including possible penalty point recognition between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The BIC is also examining the potential to share research on drink/drugs and driving with a view to developing best practice, and sharing campaign research and publicity strategies across BIC administrations.

Within this sector the Member Administrations are working together to share information and experience in the area of accessible transport and to explore issues of common interest in relation to sustainable travel.

Furthermore the BIC is looking at transport links between administrations, in recognition of the economic importance of key strategic connections.

### **Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages**

Work in this area focuses on sharing experience, best practice and measures to enhance capacity. The current work programme is focused on the following priority fields:

- Adult education provision;
- Information and communication technology;
- Planning and linguistic considerations;
- Data, research and language use surveys, and
- Legislation.

The areas for consideration for future work include:

- Community development;

- Media, and
- Fluency and usage.

### Demography

Since adopting Demography as an area of mutual interest in November 2006, the BIC has enabled the exchange of information on the impact of migration, both economic and social, and issues of definition and measurement. Through the BIC, research on such topics were drawn from across the Member Administrations. The findings will be presented at the Demography Ministerial meeting to be held in March this year in Edinburgh.

### Next Summit

The next BIC Summit will be held in September 2008 and will be hosted by Scotland.

### BIC Secretariat

14 February 2008

[www.british-irishcouncil.org](http://www.british-irishcouncil.org)

### List of Delegates

<b>Irish Government</b>	
An Taoiseach	Mr Bertie Ahern TD
Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Mr Éamon Ó Cúiv TD
Minister of State, Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Mr Pat Carey TD
<b>British Government</b>	
Secretary of State for Wales	Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy MP
Minister of State, Home Office	Mr Vernon Coaker MP
<b>Scottish Government</b>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MP MSP
Minister for Community Safety	Mr Fergus Ewing MSP
<b>Welsh Assembly Government</b>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM
deputy First Minister	Mr Ieuan Wyn Jones AM
Minister for Social Justice & Local Government	Dr Brian Gibbons AM
<b>Northern Ireland Executive</b>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Dr Ian Paisley MP MLA
deputy First Minister	Mr Martin McGuinness MP MLA

Minister of Education	Ms Caitriona Ruane MLA
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Mr Michael McGimpsey MLA
Minister of Finance and Personnel	Mr Peter Robinson MP MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Mr Nigel Dodds OBE MP MLA
Minister for Social Development	Ms Margaret Ritchie MLA
Junior Minister	Mr Ian Paisley Jnr MLA
Junior Minister	Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
<b>Jersey</b>	
Chief Minister	Senator Frank Walker
Minister for Health & Social Services	Senator Ben Shenton
<b>Guernsey</b>	
Chief Minister	Deputy Mike Torode
Minister Home Department	Deputy Geoff Mahy
<b>Isle of Man Government</b>	
Chief Minister	Hon Tony Brown MHK
Minister for Home Affairs	Hon Martyn Quayle MHK