

Joint Communiqué of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Department of Foreign Affairs, Dublin

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A meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) took place at the Cabinet Office in London on 8 May 2019.

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was represented by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon David Lidington MP, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP and John Penrose MP, Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office. The Government of Ireland was represented by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Coveney TD, and the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr Charles Flanagan TD.

The BIIGC was established under Strand Three of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement “to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of both Governments”.

The Conference discussed the following:

East-West Matters

The Conference agreed that the United Kingdom and Ireland enjoy a unique bilateral relationship with strong cooperation which takes place at all levels of government and across all policy areas. It was noted that the Irish and UK Governments had that day entered into a Memorandum of understanding reaffirming their joint commitment to the Common Travel Area.

They further reaffirmed their commitment made at the BIIGC held in November 2018 to ensure that the current high level of bilateral cooperation between Ireland and the UK is maintained and strengthened following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. At that meeting, officials had been tasked to work together to identify and explore areas of mutual interest, with a view to developing a shared bilateral work plan. Ministers reviewed the progress made by officials to date and requested further proposals for new, reinvigorated and regular opportunities for future co-operation.

Economic co-operation

Both the UK and Irish Governments were clear on the critical importance of economic co-operation between our two countries and the shared objectives of rebalancing and strengthening the Northern Ireland economy. The Conference agreed to examine new ways in which the Irish and UK Governments, along with a restored Northern Ireland Executive, can work together on areas of mutual economic interest.

The Conference welcomed the UK Government's announcement to invest up to £105m in Derry/Londonderry and the North West through the Derry and Strabane City Deal and the Inclusive Future Fund. The Irish Government agreed to explore opportunities for investment that will further support opportunities to bring greater economic prosperity and social benefits to the wider region.

Security Co-Operation

The UK and Irish Governments acknowledged the excellent ongoing cooperation in tackling the paramilitary threat and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the security relationship. The Conference reviewed the current security situation and condemned in the strongest terms the recent appalling killing of Lyra McKee. They expressed their sincere gratitude to all those who work in both jurisdictions to tackle terrorism and bring about an end to all forms of paramilitary activity.

Both the Irish Government and the UK Government recalled their commitments in the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement to ending paramilitarism and confirmed their support of the Northern Ireland Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime. They noted the ongoing work of the Independent Reporting Commission and the Joint Agency Task Force established under that Agreement.

Legacy

The Conference reviewed progress towards the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework, reiterating the commitment of the UK and Irish Governments to the implementation of the Stormont House bodies.

The UK Government provided an update on the legacy consultation analysis and key themes that have emerged, and planned next steps. The Irish Government updated the Conference on the progress on the legislative measures it is bringing forward to implement and support the Stormont House Agreement within its jurisdiction. The UK and Irish Governments discussed issues of concern in respect to a number of legacy cases raised by groups representing victims and survivors.

Rights and Citizenship matters

The Conference discussed the importance of the ongoing protection of the identity/citizenship provisions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and the unique challenges that the UK's exit from the EU presents.

The UK Government provided an update on the issue of reviewing the family migration rules for family members of the people of Northern Ireland.

Both the Irish and UK Governments reaffirmed their commitment to working together, along with EU partners, to put in place arrangements that will allow Irish citizens in Northern Ireland to continue to have access to rights, opportunities and benefits that come with EU citizenship.

Political Stability

The Conference reviewed political developments since the last meeting in November and welcomed the resumption of talks aimed at restoring all the political institutions of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement.

The shared objective of both the UK and Irish Governments is for this short focused process to proceed with urgency and with the clear aim of making rapid and substantial progress. The Conference noted the intention of the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach to review progress in the talks at the end of May.

Both the UK and Irish Governments agreed to continue working closely together in full accordance with the three-stranded approach set out in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Future meetings

It was agreed that the Conference would meet again in the coming months.

ENDS

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