

Press release: Joint Communiqué of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 2 November 2018

The Government of Ireland was represented by Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Coveney TD, and the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr Charles Flanagan TD. 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, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP.

The Conference 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:

Legacy

The Conference reviewed progress towards the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework.

Following the completion of the public consultation on draft legislation to establish the Stormont House Agreement legacy institutions, the UK Government updated the Conference on its 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 legacy framework and raised other legacy issues of concern.

Both the Irish and UK Governments reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the framework set out in the 2014 Stormont House Agreement to comprehensively address the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past, taking account of the outcome of the UK Government’s public consultation on establishing the legacy institutions.

Security Co-Operation

The Conference reviewed the current security situation, and discussed the continuing threat posed by paramilitary activity and Northern Ireland Related Terrorism in both jurisdictions.

Both the UK and Irish Governments recalled commitments in the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement to ending paramilitarism. They welcomed the publication of the first report of the Independent Reporting Commission established under that Agreement, and considered its findings and recommendations. The Conference noted in particular the Commission’s view that the restoration of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement are essential to ending

paramilitarism and achieving community transformation.

The Conference expressed their gratitude to all those involved in both jurisdictions who work tirelessly to keep people safe.

East-West Matters

The Irish and UK Governments underlined the unique relationship between their two countries and the strong cooperation that takes place at all levels of government, and across many policy areas. They reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that this close relationship would be maintained and built upon.

The Conference discussed a number of possible models for ensuring that the high level of bilateral co-operation between the United Kingdom and Ireland is maintained and strengthened following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union next March.

The Conference agreed that these new structures should clearly demonstrate the strength and depth of the relationship; provide opportunities for ministers and officials to continue to engage both formally and informally with each other; and to maintain the spirit of cooperation that has been engendered through such contacts in an EU context; as well as provide an overall architecture for cooperation that is both meaningful and sustainable in the future.

Officials were asked to take forward more detailed work in this area with a view to presenting fully worked through proposals for future East-West cooperation, for consideration by the UK and Irish Governments at a future meeting of the Conference. They agreed that these should be ambitious and should reflect the importance attached by both Governments to the bilateral relationship.

Political Stability

The Conference reviewed political developments since the last meeting in July and considered how the Irish and UK Governments can continue to work together to seek the effective operation of all of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

The UK and Irish Governments re-affirmed their shared commitment to securing the operation of the devolved power-sharing Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland and the consequent resumption of meetings of the North South Ministerial Council at the earliest opportunity.

Both the Irish and UK Governments reiterated their strong support for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements. They underlined that the institutions of the Agreement have been essential for the progress made in Northern Ireland over the past two decades and that they remain the indispensable framework for the political process in Northern Ireland. 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 spring of 2019.