

Joint Communiqué of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was represented by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP, and Rt Hon Conor Burns MP, the Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office. The Government of Ireland was represented by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Simon Coveney TD, and the Minister for Justice, Ms Helen McEntee TD.

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 the UK and Irish Governments”.

The Conference discussed the following:

East-West Matters

The UK and Irish Governments discussed the important role of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference in the development of the broader British-Irish relationship, with agreement on the deep value of strong bilateral cooperation at all levels between two close neighbours.

The Conference noted, and expressed appreciation for, the strong levels of cooperation and partnership between our respective Consular teams in Dublin, London and across the world during 2021.

Economic Co-operation

Both the Irish and UK Governments considered the critical importance of economic co-operation. The Conference agreed to work to explore synergies between the UK and Ireland’s respective Levelling Up initiative and the National Development Plan to ensure maximum benefit for the peoples of these islands.

The Conference recognised the 35th anniversary of the International Fund for Ireland and welcomed the recent launch of its new Strategy.

COP26 and Climate Change

The Conference noted the positive outcome at COP26 in Glasgow, and recognised the ongoing importance of cooperation between the United Kingdom and Ireland to act on the agreement in Glasgow, and accelerate climate action in this critical decade.

Security Co-operation

The Conference examined the current security situation. Both the Irish and UK Governments noted the importance of the high level of co-operation between

the two jurisdictions to tackle terrorism, paramilitarism and associated criminality. They recognised the ongoing valuable work of the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC) to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity, and discussed the upcoming publication of the IRC's fourth annual report.

The UK and Irish Governments noted the recent 20 year anniversary of the establishment of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and expressed their appreciation and support for the officers who serve the community and the continued good relationship between PSNI and An Garda Síochána.

Rights and Citizenship Matters

The Conference discussed the vital importance of the Common Travel Area arrangements and the need for the Irish Government and the UK Government to continue to work together to uphold the reciprocal rights and privileges British and Irish citizens have long enjoyed. The Conference acknowledged the ongoing collaboration at November's Plenary Meeting, which reaffirmed the commitment of the UK and Irish Governments to the full implementation of the Education Memorandum of Understanding that was recently signed and reviewed progress on health and a range of other areas.

The UK and Irish Governments also reaffirmed their commitment to the important guarantees of rights and the protections set out in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Legacy

The Conference reviewed the discussions to date as part of the multiparty legacy engagement process agreed at the meeting of the Conference in June and had an exchange of views on next steps. They welcomed the participation of the political parties and a wide range of victims' representatives and other stakeholders which had been critical to the process to this point.

The UK and Irish Governments also discussed issues of concern in respect to a number of individual legacy cases.

Political Stability

The Conference emphasised its support for the ongoing functioning of the devolved administration in Northern Ireland and underlined the importance of all of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement institutions operating fully and effectively given their interdependent and interlocking nature, and the importance of respecting the Agreement in all of its strands. The New Decade, New Approach agreement, which restored the institutions in January 2020, remains central to political stability, and the UK and Irish Governments reaffirmed their shared determination to continue to deliver on their respective commitments.

The Conference agreed to continue close co-operation in accordance with the three-stranded approach established in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

COVID-19 Recovery

The Conference considered the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on both jurisdictions. Both the UK and Irish Governments discussed the recognition of Covid certification and the importance of collaboration toward a shared recovery.

Future Meetings

It was agreed that the Conference should meet again in early 2022.