



**Ministerial Meeting of the Misuse of Drugs Sectoral Group
12 December 2005**

Communiqué

Minister Noel Ahern T.D., Minister of State for the National Drugs Strategy in the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, chaired a Ministerial Meeting of the British-Irish Council on the Misuse of Drugs in Government Buildings in Dublin today. Ministers reviewed progress to date on the Group's work programme and reiterated their firm commitment to combating the misuse of drugs. It was agreed that work over the coming year would be taken forward on a number of important issues including the commissioning of drug treatment services, the confiscation of criminal assets, rehabilitation for drug misusers, the use of subutex as a substitution treatment and the challenges presented by cocaine use – recreational and problematic. Ministers also highlighted the continuing value of the Council as a unique forum which has provided Members with the opportunity to work together and enhance co-operation in a tangible and practical manner.

The British-Irish Council was established under the Strand Three Provisions of the Good Friday Agreement as a forum for its Members to exchange information, discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of relevant member administrations. Ireland is the lead administration within the Council on the issue of Misuse of Drugs.

The Irish Government was represented by Minister of State Noel Ahern TD, who chaired the meeting. The British Government was represented by Mr. Paul Goggins MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office and Mr. Shaun Woodward MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Mr Hugh Henry MSP, Deputy Minister for Justice, represented the Scottish Executive. The

Government of the Isle of Man was represented by the Hon. Donald Gelling CBE CP MLC, Chief Minister, Jersey was represented by Senator Stuart Syvret President of the Drug and Alcohol Committee and Guernsey was represented by Deputy Geoff Mahy, Member of the Home Department Board.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

Today's meeting in Dublin was the fourth time that Ministers with responsibility in this area have come together to evaluate progress and consider future work. Ministers last met in Edinburgh in November 2004, when a third work programme was agreed. Today's Ministerial allowed Members to examine the successful work which the Council has taken forward in each of these important areas:

- ◆ Wales hosted a meeting in Cardiff in March 2005, which focused on the issues involved in producing guidance on undertaking confidential enquiries into drugs related deaths;
- ◆ Scotland hosted a meeting on the topic of children of substance misusing parents in Edinburgh in May;
- ◆ In June, Guernsey hosted a meeting on the topic of interventions with young people, including formal and informal education projects; and
- ◆ In November, the Isle of Man hosted a meeting which focused on arrest referral schemes.

All meetings were well attended by officials and experts from all BIC Members and valuable networks of contacts were developed. The meetings provided opportunities for those involved in the relevant area of work to discuss ideas and explore different approaches to the subject under discussion. In addition, very useful exchanges of views, experiences and best practice took place.

Ministers agreed that these meetings had provided a very useful forum for sharing, in a focussed and practical manner, the detailed expertise and knowledge, which is held across the British-Irish Council region. It was also noted that, in addition to exploring specific themes in depth, each meeting had facilitated the exchange of information on general developments on the misuse of drugs. Members

had been pleased to share information with one another on legislative and other developments in their country, on new research findings and on emerging trends in drug misuse.

Ministers today, were pleased to agree an important new programme of work for the period ahead. Building on the experience gained to date, the focus for the coming programme will be on a number of identified issues of common concern. In this regard, Wales will lead on commissioning of drug treatment services, Guernsey will lead on the confiscation of criminal assets, Ireland will host a meeting on rehabilitation for drug misusers, Jersey will explore the use of subutex as substitution treatment for opiate misusers and Northern Ireland will host a meeting on the challenges presented by cocaine misuse.

These meetings will also seek to strengthen and consolidate the ongoing co-operation and the exchange of information, experience and best practice between Members. This will include holding regular Ministerial and senior official meetings, chaired by the Irish Government as Lead Administration. These meetings will provide Members with an opportunity to update one another on recent developments and on new projects, legislation and research in the field of drug misuse.

It was agreed that Ministers would meet again in late 2006 to review progress.

British-Irish Council (Misuse of Drugs Sectoral Group)

12 December 2005

List of Delegates

Irish Government

Minister of State with responsibility for the
National Drugs Strategy
Principal Officer,
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Assistant Principal,
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Administrative Officer,
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs,

Mr. Noel Ahern TD
Mr. Michael Conroy
Mr. John Kelly
Ms. Sinéad Copeland

British Government

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in Northern Ireland
Head of International Section, Drug Legislation and Enforcement
Northern Ireland Drug and Alcohol Strategy Co-ordinator

Mr Paul Goggins MP
Mr. Shaun Woodward MP
Mr. Gabriel Denvir
Mr. Rob Phipps

Scottish Executive

Deputy Minister for Justice
Safer Communities Division

Mr. Hugh Henry, MSP
Ms Patricia Scotland

Guernsey

Member of the Home Department Board
Guernsey Drug Strategy Co-ordinator

Deputy Geoff Mahy,
Ms. Maria Eggleston

Jersey

President, Drug and Alcohol Committee
Department of Health and Social Services

Senator Stuart Syvret
Mr. Michael Gafoor

Government of the Isle of Man

Chief Minister

Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinator

Hon. Donald Gelling CBE CP
MLC
Ms. Margaret O'Reilly