



**Ministerial Meeting of the Misuse of Drugs Sectoral Group
7 February 2003
Communiqué**

Minister Noel Ahern TD, Minister of State for Community Affairs and the National Drugs Strategy hosted a meeting of Representatives from the British-Irish Council in Dublin today. Minister Ahern welcomed delegates to the meeting. BIC Members reviewed progress in the work programme agreed at the meeting of Ministers in March 2002, in line with the framework agreed at the Summit in Dublin in November 2001. Members reiterated their commitment to combating the misuse of drugs and looked forward to further co-operation in this vitally important area.

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 Bob Ainsworth MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office. Mr Hugh Henry MSP, Deputy Minister for Justice, represented the Scottish Executive. The Isle of Man was represented by Hon Mr Richard Corkill, Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government and Chair of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee. Guernsey was represented by Deputy Roger Berry OBE, President of the Board of Administration, States of Guernsey and Jersey was represented by Senator Stuart Syvret President, Health and Social Services Committee States of Jersey.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

Today's meeting was the second time within the last twelve months that Ministers with responsibility in this area have met to discuss progress since the British-Irish Council Summit held in Dublin on 30 November 2001. The Dublin Summit focussed on the issue of the misuse of drugs and was hosted by the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD.

In March 2002, BIC Ministers met in Dublin and agreed a work programme which included targeting the proceeds of drug trafficking, the need to divert young people at risk of drug misuse and the importance of providing recovering drug misusers with opportunities for training and employment. Ministers today reviewed progress in relation to the work programme in addition to discussing future work projects.

At today's meeting, Guernsey reported on the two conferences which it hosted on "Targeting the Proceeds of the Drugs Trade/Assets Confiscation" in Guernsey in May and November of last year. Approximately fifty practitioners in the area attended each of the conferences which provided a forum for the exchange of information on best practice on this important aspect of supply reduction. Members discussed how to further improve information flows within the BIC and agreed on the vital importance of effective action in this area.

The UK presented a report on the British-Irish Council study visit and conference in London in July 2002 on the 'Positive Futures' initiative. Positive Futures is a programme that aims to provide sporting programmes for young people at risk of falling into crime and drug misuse. It includes mentoring schemes and educational programmes. Practitioners were able to exchange experience and ideas on best practice in such diversion programmes and to identify what it takes to run such programmes effectively.

Members were also updated on the conference hosted by Scotland in December 2002 on educational, training and employment opportunities for recovering drug users. The conference, which was attended by over 40 policy makers and practitioners in this field, featured workshops and presentations from throughout the British-Irish Council. It also provided a unique opportunity for BIC Members to examine and compare examples of effective programmes, and identify how best practice in this area could be further developed throughout the BIC.

The Isle of Man reviewed its conference on 'Drug and Alcohol Strategies- Progress in Action' which took place in Douglas last October. BIC Members were invited to the conference which included presentations and workshops on a wide range of topics including education, prevention, treatment and criminal justice matters. The Conference helped to promote co-operation on matters of mutual interest between Administrations and the development of networks for support and information exchange.

In addition to reviewing progress to date, Members today agreed a programme of work on areas of mutual interest for the coming year, including the important issues of awareness campaigns, emerging trends in drug use, treatment modalities and working with the business community to combat drug misuse.

The Irish Government proposes to host a conference on awareness campaigns in Dublin in June 2003. The conference will examine the broad range of issues relating to awareness campaigns and how to ensure their general effectiveness. Speakers from a number of disciplines will participate and there will also be contributions from a number of BIC Member Administrations in relation to their experience in this area.

Guernsey proposes to host a conference on 'Emerging Trends in Drugs Use and Treatment Modalities' on 18/19 September 2003 with a view to raising awareness of these issues throughout the BIC, and exploring current treatment practices and options.

Also, later this year the British Government intends to host a conference on working with business to combat drug misuse.

It was agreed that Ministers would meet again in early 2004 to review progress.

British-Irish Council (Misuse of Drugs Sectoral Group)

7 February 2003

List of Delegates

Irish Government

Minister of State with responsibility for the
National Drugs Strategy
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Department of the Taoiseach

Mr. Noel Ahern TD
Ms. Kathleen Stack
Mr. Billy Byrne
Ms. Ann Whelan

British Government

Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office
(with special responsibility for drugs and organised crime)
Home Office Drugs Unit
Northern Ireland Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety

Mr. Bob Ainsworth MP
Mr. Gabriel Denvir
Ms. Jo Daykin

Scottish Executive

Deputy Minister for Justice
Head of Substance Misuse Division, Scotland

Mr. Hugh Henry, MSP
Mr. Colin Cook

Guernsey

President of the Board of Administration
Drugs Strategy Group and Head of Customs

Deputy Roger Berry OBE
Mr. Brian Richings

Jersey

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

Senator Stuart Syvret
Mr. Michael Gafoor

Isle of Man

Chief Minister and Chair of the Drug and Alcohol
Strategy Committee
Chief Secretary
Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinator

Hon Richard Corkill MHK
Ms. Mary Williams
Ms. Margaret O'Reilly