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NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

ANGLO-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

FIRST MEETING : 11 DECEMBER 1985

JOINT STATEMENT

The first meeting at Ministerial level of the Intergovernmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 was held at Stormont Castle on 11 December 1985. The joint Chairmen Mr Tom King and Mr Peter Barry, were accompanied on the British side by Dr Rhodes Boyson and Mr Nicholas Scott, and on the Irish side by Mr Michael Noonan and Mr Liam Kavanagh, as well as by officials. The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana also attended.

2. The Conference had a first discussion of how it should approach its future programme of work in all of the fields assigned to it under the Agreement as envisaged in the Joint Communiqué.

3. The Conference, in reviewing recent events including acts of terrorism in both jurisdictions, reaffirmed the total rejection by both Governments of any attempt to promote political objectives, by violence or the threat of violence and their determination to work together to ensure that those who adopt or support such methods do not succeed. As a part of this co-operative effort, the Conference discussed security co-operation between the two Governments, with particular attention to methods of improving the existing co-ordination of security activities on both sides of the border. The Irish side stated that, as a precautionary measure and to provide increased reassurance, Garda resources - both manpower and support facilities - had recently been increased in border areas and arrangements were being made for the deployment of Task Force units to supplement, as required, the work of locally-based personnel. The British side welcomed this.

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4. The Conference discussed the development of a programme of measures to improve relations between the security forces and the minority community in Northern Ireland. The Conference considered the steps which were being taken progressively in applying the principle that the Armed Forces (including the UDR) operate only in support of the civil power with the particular objective of ensuring as rapidly as possible that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there is a police presence in all operations which involve direct contact with the community. The Chief Constable of the RUC stated that this objective was in accordance with existing RUC policy. The Conference also agreed that the RUC and the Armed Forces must not only discharge their duties evenhandedly and with equal respect for the unionist and nationalist identities and traditions, but be seen by both communities to be doing so. The Chief Constable of the RUC advised the Conference that a number of other UK police forces were introducing Codes of Conduct and that, in consultation with the Police Authority, he had for some time been preparing and would introduce as soon as possible in 1986 a Code which would include these matters.

5. The Conference agreed to establish a working group of officials to consider the machinery for the further discussion of legal matters, including the administration of justice.

6. The Conference noted the statements of international support for the Agreement and affirmed that both Governments would welcome international assistance for economic development in areas which have suffered from the consequences of the instability of recent years.

7. The next regular meeting will be held early in the New Year.