

Statement for PC on Thursday 10 May 2007

Restoration of devolution in Northern Ireland, 8 May 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Further to our statement of 29 March 2007, the delegations of the United Kingdom and Ireland would like to inform participating States of positive developments in Northern Ireland.

I can announce that power-sharing devolved government in Northern Ireland was restored after more than four years in suspension on Tuesday 8 May 2007. This was an event of major significance.

Dr. Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin took up their positions as First and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. As they assumed office, along with their ten Ministerial colleagues in the Northern Ireland Executive, they took the pledge of office giving firm commitments, amongst other things, to work together to promote the interests of the whole community represented in Northern Ireland and to uphold the rule of law.

Their commitment to put aside former deeply held differences and to govern together on behalf of their people marks the opening of a new era for Northern Ireland. It is a hugely important step in consolidating the peaceful progress made since the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998 and in building a real and lasting shared future for the whole community in Northern Ireland.

It is a step which has been greatly facilitated by the efforts of the international community in support of the Irish and British governments at each step along the way, and we thank participating States for their interest. This development also has a wider significance, in offering hope to other societies which suffer from violence and division. Further significant developments in the political process will be brought to the attention of the Permanent Council.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.