



Ceann Comhairle

22 June 2012

Mr William Hay MLA
Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly
Office of the Speaker
Room 39
Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3XX

Dear Willie,

I write to inform you formally that, at its meeting on 21 June 2012, the Oireachtas North South Parliamentary Forum Working Group considered the Working Paper received from the Northern Ireland Assembly on the role and arrangements for a North/South parliamentary forum. I am pleased to confirm that, following detailed discussion, the Members agreed the paper received from the NI Assembly Working Group.

The Oireachtas Working Group also agreed in principle to meet jointly with the NI Assembly Working Group on 4 July in Belfast to make arrangements for the first meeting of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association.

The Working Group believe that, working jointly through the newly established Executive Committee, the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly are now in a position to create a valuable and effective inter-parliamentary association which has the potential to be of genuine practical benefit to people North and South. The Working Group agreed further to designate itself with immediate effect as the Oireachtas Executive Committee, as envisaged in the agreed Paper, and to elect me as Chair of the Oireachtas Executive Committee of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association.

I enclose with this letter the Paper as agreed with some minor typographical changes and with some suggested re-ordering of the paragraphs. I wish to express my appreciation to you, to all the members of the Northern Ireland Assembly Working Group and to the Assembly staff who have worked hard over a long period to achieve this significant goal. I look forward to meeting with you in Belfast on 4 July.

Yours sincerely,

Seán Barrett TD
Ceann Comhairle

NORTH-SOUTH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

1. Title

The new grouping shall be called the North-South Inter-Parliamentary Association.

2. Objectives

The Association will provide the opportunity for discussion between Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas with the objective of sharing views, information and experiences on issues of mutual interest and concern. Dialogue and engagement between members themselves will be the primary objective although the group may decide to invite non-members to address meetings. Meetings will not be open to the public.

3. Chair

~~It should be jointly chaired by a member of the Assembly and a member of Dáil Éireann elected from within the two working groups.~~

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4.3. Membership and quorum of the Association Forum

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The proposed membership will be drawn in equal numbers from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Association shall comprise 50 members in total. (48 and 2 Joint Chairs)

Nominations shall be a matter for the Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas respectively but must reflect the composition of the Assembly and the Houses. Northern Ireland Assembly members must be in proportion to party strengths and the individuals comprising the party allocations will be chosen by the respective party leaders.

Members attending can be substituted by their respective party leader as necessary.

The quorum shall be fifty percent of the total number comprising the Association excluding the Joint Chairs, i.e. 24 members.

5. Meetings and Venue

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~~Two meetings shall be held each year on a rotational basis with dates agreed by the Association's executive committee. Meetings shall be held at a venue organised by the host.~~

6.4. Method of operation of the Association Forum

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An Executive Committee will be formed comprising twelve members (two joint-chairs and ten members), five drawn from the Houses of the Oireachtas and five drawn from the Assembly. To ensure that one chair is elected from the Assembly and one from the Oireachtas it is proposed that the five members of the Assembly working group will elect one chair and the members of the Oireachtas working group will elect the other chair. To ensure

continuity it is proposed initially that the working groups from the Assembly and the Oireachtas will comprise the twelve member ~~E~~xecutive ~~C~~ommittee.

The Executive ~~C~~ommittee will agree the agenda and arrangements for the meetings on a proposal from the chairs.

The Association and Executive Committee will operate by consensus.

The Association plenary meetings will be chaired by the host joint chair. The visiting joint chair will act as deputy chair at the plenary meeting.

Reports to be in the form of an agreed communique which should be laid before the Houses and the Assembly.

5. Chair

It should be jointly chaired by a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and a member of Dáil Éireann elected from within the Executive Committee.

6. Meetings and Venue

Two meetings shall be held each year on a rotational basis with dates agreed by the Association's Executive Committee. Meetings shall be held at a venue organised by the host.

7. Funding Arrangements and mechanisms

It is not envisaged that ~~We do not envisage~~ the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association placing any additional costs ~~on to~~ the public purse. The limited costs of hosting meetings will be met by the host from within existing budgets.

The Association ~~will to~~ be serviced by staff of the Assembly and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

8. Inaugural meeting of the Association

The inaugural meeting of the Association will take place in 2012. The date and agenda for the inaugural meeting will be agreed by the Executive Committee in advance of the meeting.