



BRITISH IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (BIPA): 53rd PLENARY SESSION

Introduction

1. The 53rd Plenary Session of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) took place in the Marriott Hotel, Cardiff from Monday 28 November to Tuesday 29 November 2016. The Scottish Parliament was represented at the Cardiff Plenary by Deputy Presiding Officer Linda Fabiani MSP, Willie Coffey MSP, John Scott MSP and Ross Greer MSP.

Themes

2. The impact of Brexit on relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom formed the central theme of the 53rd plenary. Other topics of discussion included health service funding and governance in the BIPA jurisdictions and youth engagement and the National Assembly for Wales.

Plenary Summary

3. The Plenary began with a welcome address by the First Minister of Wales, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, which focussed on “the challenges and opportunities of the United Kingdom’s decision to exit the European Union” from a Welsh perspective. This was followed by an address, again focusing on the main plenary theme of the impact of Brexit on relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom, by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Exiting the European Union, Robin Walker MP. Both addresses were followed by questions from Assembly members.
4. Thereafter a Motion lodged by the Steering Committee was debated, and agreed, by the Assembly. The Motion read, “That the Assembly, in the context of the UK’s decision to leave the EU and Ireland’s continuing commitment to remain in the EU, and having respect to the diversity of views within these islands and across the UK on Brexit, draws attention to the many positive achievements in British-Irish relations, including the Common Travel Area, the absence of a ‘hard border’ and the gains of the peace process, and expresses the desire that these achievements will be safeguarded, for the UK, Ireland and the Crown Dependencies, whatever the future relationship may be between the UK and the EU.”
5. Speeches from the Ambassador of Ireland to the UK, His Excellency Dan Mulhall, and the Chair of the House of Lords EU Internal Market Sub-

Committee, the Rt Hon Lord Whitty, on the theme of 'Implications of Brexit for British-Irish Relations' also contributed to the debate on the Motion lodged by the Steering Committee.

6. The final contributor on the first day of plenary was the UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, who addressed members of the Assembly on "the key priorities for the UK Government in Northern Ireland, including the challenges and opportunities presented by the decision to leave the European Union". His address was followed by questions from the floor.
7. The second day of Plenary began with an address by the Deputy Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, Ann Jones AM, on how the Assembly's approach to engaging children and young people in the Assembly's work has evolved over recent years and its plans for the future. The Deputy Presiding Officer was joined by Kelly Harris, the National Assembly's youth engagement officer, and Christian Webb, who represented the five nations' strategic youth partnership, made up of organisations from across the five nations and jurisdictions of BIPA: Youth Cymru, Youth Scotland, Youth Work Ireland, Youth Action Northern Ireland and UK Youth. All presentations were followed by questions from Assembly Members.
8. Thereafter followed presentations by Dr Brian Turner, University College Cork, and Tim Gardner, Senior Policy Fellow, The Health Foundation on health service funding and governance in the BIPA jurisdictions.
9. The final item on the agenda at the 53rd plenary was an update on the work currently being undertaken by the four BIPA subject committees. No committee reports were presented and agreed upon at plenary

Further Information

10. The 54th plenary of the BIPA will be held in Kilkenny, Ireland on 17 and 18 July 2017.

**International Relations Office
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