

# European and External Affairs Committee

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### Paper to note

#### Title: National Assembly for Wales: European and International Relations Strategy

#### Purpose

1. The input of the European and External Affairs Committee is sought in considering possible themes and activities to underpin the Assembly's European and international relations for the Third Assembly.

#### Background

2. The European and International Team provides support to the Assembly's corporate programme of external relations. The Team is preparing a strategy for the conduct of European and International Relations for the period 2007-11. The European and External Affairs Committee remit allows it to consider any matters relevant to the exercise by the Assembly of any of its functions relating to the European Union or External Affairs. The input of the Committee would therefore be welcomed at this draft stage before it is submitted to the Assembly Commission.

3. The Assembly participates in a number of regional inter-parliamentary forums:

The Presiding Officer takes part in meetings of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE);

Assembly Members participate within UK delegations to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Regional Chamber of the Council of Europe (CoE);

The Assembly has an active branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The branch includes all Assembly Members and participates in conferences and seminars promoting parliamentary democracy. It holds an annual Commonwealth Day event at the Assembly. It has developed a strong links with the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho;

A delegation of Assembly Members attends meetings and participates in the committees of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body (BIIPB).

4. The Assembly also receives many requests from other parliaments, assemblies, organisations and individuals wishing to visit and requiring a tailored programme co-ordinated by the European and International Relations Team.

5. The draft strategy aims to improve the service offered by the team by:

adopting a more pro-active stance by identifying themes platforms and partners and opportunities;

considering all areas of the Assembly as participants in the programme of European and international relations to ensure a co-ordinated and inclusive approach;

better communicating the variety of activities undertaken by the Assembly to an internal and external audience.

6. The themes and activities in the draft strategy are set out in Annex 1. These have been developed in consultation with the Brussels Office, the Clerk of the European and External Affairs Committee and the Presiding Officer.

7. The input of the Committee in reviewing activities undertaken and providing input on the direction of future activities would be very welcome. It is suggested that the Committee might wish to receive a written review of activities to note each term and the opportunity of consolidated report at least once each year.

#### Summary

8. This paper provides a list of themes and activities on which to focus the Assembly's European and International Relations during the Third Assembly. Consideration and discussion of these objectives by the Committee will assist in refining a draft European and International Relations Strategy for eventual submission to the Assembly Commission. It is intended to submit a paper to the Assembly Commission before the end of the Autumn Term.

#### Annex 1

##### European and International Relations Priorities for the Third Assembly

##### Principles for Conduct of European and International Relations:

Focussed activity in support of Assembly Commission and Assembly Parliamentary Service Purpose and Goals

The Assembly has much to learn and much it can offer (and has a role to play in the promotion of participative, parliamentary democracy)

Activities will be independent and non party-political

Activities should be transparent, accessible and sustainable

### **Purpose of European and International Relations:**

The purpose of our European and International relations programme is to:

Look outwardly to Europe and beyond to develop co-operative partnerships that assist the Assembly in its aim of heralding devolution and widening engagement in the democratic process;and

Raise the profile of the Assembly and Wales at the European regional level and internationally as an exemplar of participative parliamentary democracy

### **Objectives**

#### **1. Promote and widen engagement in devolution**

Explore and develop partnerships with parliaments and assemblies across Europe and the Commonwealth to learn from and share best practice in promoting and widening engagement. In particular explore opportunities for sharing experience in:

**e-Democracy:** through participation in established working groups including the CALRE e-Democracy Working Group

**Youth Parliaments / Engaging Young People in Politics:** through participation in appropriate networks and events, and finding and learning from best practice examples.

Raise awareness of and engagement in the Assembly within international communities in Wales, in particular:

Recent arrivals to Wales from Europe's new Member States

Other established cultural communities in Wales

#### **2. Play an active role in inter-parliamentary relations within Europe:**

Develop our engagement with the European Union's institutions and other European organisations and to promote understanding of the Assembly's work on EU issues:

**CALRE:** Assist the Presiding Officer's participation in CALRE including the possibility of a Wales presidency within the Third Assembly

**Subsidiarity:** Assist effective monitoring of EU Legislation through participation in Committee of the Regions Subsidiarity Monitoring Network

**Committee of the Regions and Council of Europe Regional Chamber:** Support participation of the Assembly's Members of Committee of the Regions and Council of Europe Regional Chamber. Possible hosting of a Committee of the Regions Commission meeting or an event in Wales.

**European Commission and European Parliament:** Co-operation / dialogue with the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament and European Parliament Offices on areas of mutual interest

**UK-European Committee Chairs Forum:** EEAC Chair's participation in meetings of the Forum

**Assembly Committees:** Support to Assembly committees' and rapporteur groups' study visits and promoting understanding of their work, for example, through the "Europe Matters" newsletter.

**Individual Members' Study Visits:** Support to Assembly Members study visits under EU entitlement

#### **2. Play an active role in inter-parliamentary relations within the islands of Britain and Ireland:**

**'Speakers' Conference':** Participation by the Llywydd in meetings of the 'Speaker's Conference' of the UK's devolved parliaments and assemblies

**British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body:** Assembly Members' participation in BIIPB plenary meetings and committee inquiries

**Professional networks:** Assembly Parliamentary Service participation in professional networks e.g British Irish Parliamentary Reports Association; Inter-Parliamentary Corporate Contact Group etc

#### **3. Take an active part in the work of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association:**

**Attend / host conferences and seminars:** Participation in conferences and seminars organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association International and its constituent branches

**Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians:** participation in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network

**Lesotho Link:** Strengthen the capacity of the Lesotho Parliament to function effectively - continuation of CPA Wales Branch links with Lesotho

**4. Work in partnership with established bodies active in the development of good governance and parliamentary democracy:**

**Partnership Projects and Activities:** Work in partnership with UK and international organisations active in parliamentary strengthening and developing emerging democracies such as the British Council, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Department for International Development, Overseas Development Institute and the World Bank.

**Inter Parliamentary Union:** Assistance to programmes of international parliamentary diplomacy. Provide Wales input to Inter-Parliamentary Union national parliamentary delegations visiting the UK

**5. Assist in raising the profile of Wales internationally:**

**Diplomatic and high profile visitors to Wales / events in Wales:** co-operation with the Welsh Assembly Government in providing Assembly input to programmes for official visits / visitors to Wales.

**Bi-lateral Links:** Provide parliamentary component, where sought, to Welsh Assembly Government bi-lateral links / co-operation in Europe.

**What will success look like?**

By 2011 it is intended the Assembly will be an acknowledged contributor to and influence upon inter-parliamentary affairs at the European regional level and within the Commonwealth. It will have:

incorporated best practice in e-democracy and civic engagement to make the Assembly more accessible to the people of Wales;

played a leadership role for the UK in developing relations between European regional parliaments and our engagement with the European Union's institutions;

promoted Wales internationally as a positive example of participatory democracy, offering experience to the benefit of others;

developed experience and partnerships to provide a sustainable platform to contribute to the development of parliamentary democracy internationally.