

European and External Affairs Committee.

Date: 31st October 2002
Time: 2:00pm
Venue: Committee Room 3&4, National Assembly Building
Title: Chair's Report

Purpose

1. To provide an update on a range of issues arising since the Committee's last meeting

Recommendation

2. Members to note the content of the report.

Background

3. The Committee last met on 10th July 2002. This paper provides information on contacts between National Assembly Members and officials of the Welsh Assembly Government with European and International organisations or National Governments since the last meeting.

General EU Issues.

4. Rose D'Sa has been appointed to continue for a further term on Group III (other interests) of the European Economic and Social Committee. Brian Curtis (Wales TUC) has been appointed on to Group II (workers) of the Committee.
5. The next meeting of the Enlargement Working Group, will be held on 14 November 2002. I have asked the Deputy First Minister to take over the chair of the group.
6. The Convention on the Future of Europe has been continuing its work after a short summer break. It seems very likely now that one of its proposals will be for a Constitution for the European Union for the first time ever. Also of particular interest to us, are the thoughts being collected on subsidiarity, the potential oversight role of national parliaments (and how regions will play a part), competences and simplification of procedures. Peter Hain, for example, has been sitting on the working group looking at subsidiarity – an issue close to our hearts. The Convention chair, Giscard d'Estaing, will produce a draft Constitution for public discussion any time now. The Convention itself will run until about next summer, when it will make recommendations to the Member States' Governments who will then pick up the issues at the IGC, probably completing in 2004. I am delighted that Peter Hain, Gisela Stuart and David

Heathcoat-Amory, have been able to join us today.

First Minister's Activities

7. **29th August-6 September.** World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa. I attended the summit as part of the UK delegation. The primary aim was to co-host a conference to establish an international network of regional governments promoting sustainable development. I chaired the sessions of this event which agreed the `Guteng Declaration`.

To promote Wales' leading role in sustainable development, I also addressed events on business transparency with the private sector and on the use of the ecological footprint as an indicator and held meetings with business and regional government leaders. I presented a cheque to an `eco-city` project at Ivory Park, a Township between Johannesburg and Pretoria on behalf of the delegates to the Wales preparatory conference for the summit. The money has funded solar panels on the community centre.

8. **7th-12 September.** Accompanying a Trade Mission to Australia and promoting Wales overseas. The mission aimed to support Welsh business and political interests in New South Wales, which is Australia's main commercial centre and underline the importance of the Memorandum of Understanding between Wales and New South Wales, whilst also raising Wales' profile with senior opinion formers.
9. **7th-13th October.** Accompanying a Trade Mission to Saudi Arabia and Dubai promoting Wales overseas.
10. **17th October.** Devolution Seminar City Hall.
11. **18th October.** Seminar on the future of the structural funds. The aim of the seminar was to broaden the debate in Wales on the future of the EU structural funds by inviting a variety of interests to attend a one-day session in Swansea. I gave a speech on the importance to Wales of taking a close interest in this important topic. Among other speakers, DTI officials were at the seminar to represent the UK government's emerging position to those attending, and to take away views from Wales, which will help inform them as they advise their own Ministers. This event was an opportunity for organisations and experts to come together and discuss an issue of major importance to Wales, allowing the emerging position of interests such as local government in Wales to be aired and informally discussed.
12. A table containing details of international events in which Assembly Members and officials participated can be found at Annex 1. The international activities of Wales Trade International can be found at Annex 2.

Compliance

13. The Committee is established under Standing Order 15. Section 33 of the Government of Wales Act (which has been delegated to the First Minister) provides for the Assembly to consider and make appropriate representations about any matter affecting Wales. The Assembly Compliance Office has been consulted and is content with the compliance aspects.

Financial Implications

14. There are no additional financial implications for the Assembly arising from the issues covered in this report.

European and External Affairs Division

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