

# Joint Statement by the Irish and UK Delegations of the Committee of the Regions and Congress

*Belfast, 10 December, 2007*

*The UK and Irish delegations to the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, meeting jointly in Belfast on December 10, 2007, agree the following joint statement.*

## **Introduction**

1. The Irish and UK Delegations welcome the opportunity to meet jointly in Belfast at an exciting time for Northern Ireland and support all efforts to make the restored power-sharing government a political and democratic success and to ensure a lasting and sustainable peace process.
2. Both Delegations agreed their individual priorities for 2008 and have pledged to co-operate on areas of common interest, to co-ordinate common objectives and to promote shared principles for how the two bodies operate in representing the views of sub-Member State government in the EU decision-making structure and the wider European space.
3. The Delegations believe that the activities and priorities of the CoR and Congress should reflect the concerns of local, regional and devolved governments and their elected representatives on these bodies. The Delegations, in conjunction with the other national delegations and political groups, will seek to influence CoR and Congress political priorities and work programme to ensure relevance to sub-Member State government.

## **Greater Influence and Impact**

4. The Irish and UK Delegations promote the highest level of participation and involvement of elected members in the work of the CoR and Congress and will continue to work to ensure that the views and concerns of their local, regional and devolved authorities are fully recognised in the work of these two bodies.
5. The Delegations pledge to co-operate, where possible, in following-up on opinions and reports that their members have drafted, to ensure better visibility and impact.
6. The Irish and UK Delegations will play a role in enhancing the links between the CoR, the European Parliament, and the Council of Ministers, including through bilateral contacts with their respective Permanent Representations to the EU; and between the Congress and both the Parliamentary Assembly and Committee of Ministers, including through bilateral contacts with their respective Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe.

7. The Delegations will work to ensure that their regions, local and devolved authorities maximise their participation in relevant CoR and Congress studies and initiatives, such as the Lisbon Monitoring Network, Subsidiarity Monitoring Network and the EGTC implementation group.

### **Better Communication and Visibility**

8. The Irish and UK Delegations recognises the need for better informed citizens and welcome efforts to communicate Europe to our citizens and accepts that there is a role for members of the CoR and Congress in this regard.
9. Both Delegations will explore the potential for co-operation with the European Commission and Parliament Representations in their own countries in providing our citizens with factual, clear and concise information on the European Union.
10. The Irish and UK Delegation recognise the opportunity that the ratification process of the new EU Reform Treaty brings in terms of debating the role and impact of our local, regional and devolved authorities in European governance.
11. The Delegations pledge to share experience and best practice in assisting their members have a greater role and impact in the work of the CoR and Congress and better communicate this to the authorities that they represent and through the press and media.