

Convenor of the European and External Relations Committee

JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE (EUROPE), 16 JUNE 2014

1. I represented the Scottish Government at the meeting of the JMC(E) on 16 June. The meeting was chaired by David Lidington (Minister of State for Europe) and attended by Michael Fallon (BIS/DECC), Lord Livingston (FCO/BIS), Nicky Morgan (HMT), Lord Wallace of Tankerness (SO) and David Jones (WO) from the UK Government. Jane Hutt (Minister for Finance) represented the Welsh Government and Junior Ministers Jonathan Bell and Jennifer McCann represented the Northern Ireland Executive.

2. The agenda for the meeting was (1) Promoting EU careers; (2) EU institutional renewal; (3) Preparations for June's European Council; and (4) JMC(E) organisation.

Promoting EU Careers

3. On this agenda item, I highlighted the steps being adopted in Scotland to increase our influence in the EU institutions – continued use of graduate internship programmes in Brussels to develop candidates; increases in secondments to the Commission; our nomination of highly qualified SG officials for posts within the *Cabinet* of the new Commissioners; and recent events at our universities raising awareness of EU careers. I also highlighted that importance of tracking the success of applications through the *concours* to help identify what the issues are and the best means of addressing them.

EU institutional renewal

4. Following the renewal of the EU institutions in light of the elections to the European Parliament, it is going to be increasingly important for Scotland and, the UK as a whole, to influence the new Commission's agenda.

5. I outlined some of the Scottish Government's top priorities for EU action including: promoting growth and competitiveness while simultaneously pursuing social objectives (such as tackling youth unemployment and the establishment of a living wage) so as to enable the EU to reconnect with its citizens; the requirement for continued regulatory reform and the expansion of the Commission's REFIT programme; action on climate change and energy security with more ambitious targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases and the use of renewable energy sources; and, in relation to health, our aim of engaging with the Member States and EU institutions on the preliminary reference to the Court of Justice on minimum unit pricing for alcohol. I also highlighted TTIP and the free movement of persons as important areas which will continue to develop under the new Commission.

6. I also agreed to work together with the UK Government to influence the new Commission in accordance with these priorities.

Preparations for June's European Council

7. Under this agenda item, I raised questions of the UK Government regarding the European Semester and the Commission's Country-Specific Recommendations for the UK. I also asked questions surrounding the EU's foreign policy on Iraq ahead of the meeting of the European Council on 23 June. I also requested that any further EU action on the free movement of persons be informed and evidence-based.

JMC(E) organisation

8. Following the problems associated with the cancellation and re-scheduling of the March JMC(E), I stressed that the most important point was that we should be able to communicate our position to the UK Government before European Council so that we can inform the UK position.

FIONA HYSLOP

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, 30 June 2014