

International Relations Monitoring Report

January 2024 – Issue 1

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1. Introduction

The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee has a broad remit covering a wide range of areas. In March 2022, the Committee noted its intention to conduct regular monitoring of international activity undertaken by Welsh Ministers as part of its [strategy and priorities for the Sixth Senedd](#).

This monitoring report is intended to provide Members of the Committee with an update on key policy developments related to the Committee’s international relations remit. This includes relevant statements made by the Welsh and UK Governments, as well as public bodies, delivery partners and stakeholders. Relevant publications from Senedd Research will also be included in the report.

The report covers the period September 2023 – December 2023.

2. International

This section summarises key developments covered by the [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#) and other relevant updates.

Key developments

Scottish Government's "feminist approach to international relations"

In November 2023, the Scottish Government published its [position paper on the scope and guiding principles of its feminist approach to international relations](#). It said:

"a feminist approach for Scotland will leverage all aspects of Scotland's international policy to advance gender equality and the rights of women, girls and marginalised groups."

Wales in France 2023

The Welsh Government outlined activities which took place around the Rugby World Cup during September and October, [as part of Wales in France 2023](#). Ministerial visits included the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Minister for Finance and Local Government, and the First Minister.

Wales in India 2024

The [First Minister has confirmed that 2024 will be the year of Wales in India](#), with a focus on, *"...developing trade and investment links, soft power and NHS health links"*.

Welsh Government to update Nation of Sanctuary in 2024

During an [update on Nation of Sanctuary on 19 September 2023](#), the Minister for Social Justice said the Welsh Government would consult on the plan in December 2023, before publishing the refreshed plan in 2024. In [response to an oral question on 13 December 2023](#), the Minister said:

"we will shortly publish our 2023 nation of sanctuary report [...] We are currently undertaking work to refresh our 'Nation of Sanctuary—Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan' and we'll be engaging those directly affected by our work in the coming weeks."

The Minister also attended [the Safety, Security and Migration Interministerial Group](#), noting that she:

“expressed my disappointment that the vote by the Senedd to withhold consent to the Illegal Migration Bill was not considered by UK Government.”

She emphasised the Welsh Government's commitment to being a Nation of Sanctuary.

Welsh traditions set to be formally recognised as UK joins UNESCO Convention

The UK Government confirmed [its intention to ratify the 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#), launching a [consultation](#) seeking the public's views on how to implement the Convention across the UK. This action will enable communities in Wales to nominate traditions such as the Mari Lwyd and St David's Day celebrations for inclusion in a new register of UK cultural heritage. The UK Government said it has and will continue to work with the devolved governments to implement the convention and collate the register, which is expected to open for nominations next year.

Scotland-Türkiye meeting breach of protocol, says UK Foreign Secretary

Following a meeting between Scotland's First Minister, Humza Yousaf, and President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, UK Foreign Secretary, David Cameron, [issued a letter which said the meeting breached protocols on Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(FCDO\) support](#) to devolved government ministers' overseas visits. This was due to no UK official being present at the meeting. Lord Cameron said FCDO support would be withdrawn if subsequent breaches occur.

Counsel General pushes for Intergovernmental Ministerial Group on International Relations

The Counsel General issued a statement on his attendance at the [fifth meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee](#) (IMSC) on 19 October 2023. As part of the discussion relating to international issues and the International Development White Paper, the Counsel General pressed for further consideration be given to an Inter-Ministerial Group for international relations. The IMSC [agreed to consider how to ensure international matters are appropriately considered](#) in the Intergovernmental Relations system, including through ministerial level engagement. It said it would return to the issue.

Other updates

Month	Source	Details
December	Welsh Government	The First Minister confirmed that Welsh Government will send three officials to COP 28 .
	Global Wales	Global Wales visited Vietnam as part of the Going Global partnership project . The focus was gender equality as part of the Vietnamese Higher Education system reform.

Month	Source	Details
	Welsh Government <i>(Wales in North America)</i>	The Wales in North America team launched its annual embassy adoption programme , alongside the Scottish Government.
	Welsh Government <i>(International)</i>	The Welsh Government's Head of Middle East and North Africa attended UN Action for Climate Empowerment's breakfast to discuss Wales's Future Generations Act.
October	Welsh Government	The Welsh Government issued a written statement on Taith , highlighting that 11,000 people had participated in the programme.
	Written Question WQ89306 (e)	Sam Rowlands : Will the First Minister provide a list of visits by Welsh Government Ministers to Welsh Government international offices since the start of this Senedd term? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tabled: 12 October ▪ Answer due: 19 October ▪ Not yet answered
	Welsh Government	The Consular Association of Wales met with the Welsh Government to discuss areas of common interest and cooperation.
	Welsh Government <i>(Wales in North America)</i>	Wales in North America attended Earthshot Innovation Summit , alongside the Future Generations Commissioner, Derek Walker, to promote Wales as a globally responsible nation.
	Welsh Government <i>(Wales in North America)</i>	Wales in North America met with the First Minister to discuss the work of the team.
	Welsh Government	The First Minister met with the following ambassadors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ US Ambassador ▪ Thai Ambassador ▪ Italian Ambassador ▪ Argentine Ambassador

3. Europe

This section summarises the latest news relating to Europe, and lists important updates.

Key developments

Ireland-Wales Cooperation Programme

The Welsh Government published its [EU Funds: Ireland-Wales Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 annual implementation report 2022](#).

The report stated that, by the end of 2022, the programme had fully committed investment in 24 cross-border projects. It includes case studies relating to the CHERISH and CUPHAT projects, who gave evidence to the Committee's Wales-Ireland Relations inquiry.

Committee visit to Brussels

The [Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee visited Brussels](#) as part of its [UK-EU Governance inquiry](#). The inquiry focused on the role of devolved governments and legislatures in UK-EU relations. Its report made a number of recommendations, including echoing this Committee's call for the Welsh Government to set out its strategic priorities in a dedicated EU strategy, or in a refreshed International Strategy.

Other updates

Month	Source	Details
December	Welsh Government (<i>Wales in Europe</i>)	Wales in Europe met with the Gibraltar Government representative .
November	Welsh Government (<i>Wales in Europe</i>)	Wales in Europe met with the Deputy General Representative from the Delegation of Flanders .
September	Welsh Government (<i>Wales in Europe</i>)	The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership met with MEPs in Brussels to promote the Social Partnership Act.

Month	Source	Details
	UK Government	The UK Government issued a joint statement on the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee meeting, 28 September 2023
	UK Government	The UK Government issued a statement after the fourth meeting of the Separation Agreement Joint Committee between the UK and EEA EFTA states.

Welsh Government Ministerial Outward/Inward Visits: October – December 2023

Minister/Guest	Location	Purpose of Visit	Date
Australian High Commissioner	Wales	The Minister for Economy met with the High Commissioner as part of Wales Tech Week. Their meeting discussed opportunities for greater trade, collaboration and investment in tech and cyber.	Oct 2023
Irish Ministers	Wales	The First Minister and other Cabinet members met with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, and Irish Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science as part of the Wales/Ireland Ministerial Forum in North Wales. Details were published in a written statement .	Oct 2023
New Zealand High Commissioner	Wales	The First Minister met the High Commissioner to share learning on Universal Basic Income, the Well-being Alliance, and the young vote. The High Commissioner also met with the Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and attended the Blas Cymru/Taste of Wales event.	Oct 2023
OECD (not on Welsh Government list)	Wales	The OECD met with Minister for Economy to discuss a project on regional development .	Oct 2023
First Minister	France	The First Minister visited France to take part in a programme of events celebrating the Wales in France year and to support promotional	Oct 2023

		activity surrounding the group stages of the Rugby World Cup. Details of the visit were published in a written statement .	
Head of the Palestinian Mission to the UK	Wales	The First Minister met with the Head of the Palestinian Mission to the UK to discuss the conflict in the Middle East.	Nov 2023
Japanese Ambassador to the UK	Wales	The Ambassador visited Wales to attend an event celebrating 50 years of Japanese investment in Wales. The First Minister held a bilateral meeting with the Ambassador to discuss Wales/Japan relations and the Minister for Economy met with the Ambassador at a business dinner in the evening.	Nov 2023
Indian High Commissioner	Wales	The First Minister met with the Indian High Commissioner at an event organised by the Sikh Council of Wales at Cardiff University. The 2024 Wales in India campaign was discussed and plans for a reception at the High Commission around St David's Day next year.	Nov 2023
Former first couple, Hillary & Bill Clinton	Swansea	The First Minister met with both Hillary and Bill Clinton when they all took part in the Hillary Rodham-Clinton Global Challenges Summit at Swansea University. The event discussed some of the most important global issues, including health and social inequality, the climate emergency and leadership for future generations.	Nov 2023
Minister for Economy	Germany	The Minister for Economy undertook a three-day visit to Germany , travelling to Düsseldorf, Stuttgart and Munich. The visit included the signing of a Statement of Cooperation between Wales and the German state of Baden-Württemberg, a visit to MEDICA to support Welsh life science companies, and a visit to Semicon Europa 2023.	Nov 2023

First Minister	Ireland	The First Minister attended the 40th meeting of the British-Irish Council on 23 and 24 November, which was hosted by the Government of Ireland. A joint Communiqué was issued after the Summit, which is available here	Nov 2023
No Ministerial visits in December			