

## **6<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**15 November 2024**

The Interparliamentary Forum (IPF) met for the sixth time on 15 November 2024 at the Northern Ireland Assembly. The meeting was chaired by Paula Bradshaw MLA and Matthew O'Toole MLA, chairs of the Committee for the Executive Office and Committee for Finance and attended by representatives from the House of Commons, House of Lords, Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru.

Attendees were welcomed by Assembly Speaker Edwin Poots MLA who welcomed the Forum to its first meeting in Parliament Buildings, the home of the Northern Ireland Assembly. He said that he was delighted that the Assembly was hosting this meeting and emphasised the importance of continued dialogue amongst parliamentarians to share best practice and innovation as well as learning around common challenges.

We heard updates from each legislature and discussed issues of common interest including intergovernmental relations, the nature of devolution and the legislative consent process.

We discussed the new mandate for the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly following the elections to both the European and UK parliaments in 2024, and look forward to the UK Parliamentary Delegation being appointed very soon. We discussed the role of the devolved legislatures in the PPA and participants from the devolved legislatures emphasised the importance of their attendance as observers. There was consideration of the impact of the UK Government using delegated powers to legislate in devolved areas, alongside the use of framework Bills by devolved governments. There was reflection on the adequacy of existing processes to provide budgets for the devolved administrations and the need for engagement from the UK Government on this.

There was also discussion about the operation of the arrangements for intergovernmental relations and we heard from senior officials at The Executive Office and Cabinet Office on developments on this issue, including the functioning of the structures and opportunities for the voices of the devolved administrations to be heard. There was engagement around the transparency benefits of putting meeting structures on a statutory basis and whether this would impact on their flexibility. Scrutiny of the Common Frameworks process was raised and there was reflection on the process for dispute resolution, including a potential judicial oversight. Democratic accountability was highlighted as a common issue and the use of informal networks was discussed.

The Forum welcomes the commitment from the new UK Government to reset relations between the four governments within the UK. The Forum would also welcome a commitment that this reset extends to relations with the devolved legislatures including a recognition that there will be occasions when it is helpful for committees in the devolved legislatures to hear from UK Ministers. We also recognised the importance of Ministers in the devolved administrations providing information and evidence to the committees in the House of Lords and House of Commons.

## **Agreed**

The Forum agreed to explore how we can encourage UK Ministers and officials to respond positively and in a timely way to requests from committees in devolved administrations to give evidence in the spirit of reciprocity.

The Forum agreed to write to the Executive Office to seek an update on the latest position on Common Frameworks.

We agreed to invite Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations Pat McFadden to attend the next meeting of the Forum to discuss his priorities for this important area of work.

The Forum will meet again in early 2025.