

Address by Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan
OSCE Conference – “Shared Future: building and sustaining
Peace, the Northern Ireland Case Study”

Friday, 27 April 2012

I am delighted to be with you here this morning and I am particularly pleased to be joined by Northern Ireland Minister for Justice, David Ford and my colleague from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Deputy Chief Constable Judith Gillespie.

It is significant that in addressing the topic of building and sustaining peace this conference seeks to highlight and explore the contribution of justice and policing.

Effective policing and a system of justice which has the trust and confidence of the community are fundamental to a healthy society. Strong relationships and high levels of engagement between the police and the community they serve are also essential. As Robert Peel himself said:

"The police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence."

On this island there is another relationship which is critical to securing the safety and wellbeing of those who reside and visit here – that is the relationship between the two police services: An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

We share the burden of responsibility for protecting this island. Our goals and objectives are to build and maintain safe communities where people can go about their daily lives secure in the knowledge that police on both sides of the Border are working together to protect them and their quality of life.

The determination of both police services to tackle crime together has never been stronger and we work together across the whole spectrum of police activity. As well as addressing the most obvious challenges such as serious, organised and paramilitary crime we also cooperate in the areas of roads policing, training and shared learning. All of this enhances our ability to police effectively.

Cross Border Policing Strategy

Early last year An Garda Síochána and the PSNI published a cross border policing strategy which sought to build on the existing co-operation and enhance the policing capabilities of both Police Services. While both organisations had worked together effectively and with important results over the years, the agreement on a joint strategy recognises that even stronger alliances in relation to cross border investigations and operations, intelligence sharing and security right through to communication and information technology, training and emergency planning will benefit everyone.

Terrorism, serious and organised crime, and local crime strike fear into the heart of communities and know no boundaries. It is therefore increasingly important that law enforcement agencies

work in partnership to achieve the shared objective of keeping all of our communities safe.

Through sharing information and intelligence, and by putting in place joint policing operations, many instances of terrorism, serious and organised crime and local crime are prevented and undoubtedly lives are saved. Those involved in such activity can be identified and brought to justice.

Criminals have always sought to exploit the border in pursuit of profit. As criminals innovate, so too must we explore new avenues and new tools in order to bring them to justice. Close cooperation between all agencies – not just An Garda Síochána and the PSNI but also Her Majesty's Revenue Service, the Irish Revenue/Customs Service and SOCA - have led to some significant successes against major criminal elements.

Cross Border Organised Crime Seminars

Organised crime in particular can have a corrosive effect on our communities as well as damaging legitimate business and enterprise. Crimes such as counterfeiting and smuggling which are sometimes mistakenly viewed as victimless crimes can have serious consequences for the community, for businesses and for governments. The relationships and partnerships forged between our jurisdictions are therefore crucial in preventing criminals from making profit, exploiting vulnerable people and damaging our economies.

On an annual basis, key representatives from each police service together with other agencies attend a Cross-Border seminar on Organised Crime which is designed to underline and support the daily cooperation between us all in dealing with organised crime.

Confronting crime which crosses two jurisdictions can raise particular issues and challenges for law enforcement authorities. Our response is to constantly strive to achieve the closest possible cooperation in order to match the ingenuity and modus operandi of criminal elements.

As well as confronting serious and organised crime, frontline officers in the Border area engage in consistent cooperation dealing with everyday occurrences from petty crime through to road traffic offences. They are also engaged in other projects such as emergency planning in order to maximise the effectiveness of any joint response that might be required in the event of a major emergency.

Paramilitary Crime

All policing activity, by its very nature, involves risks and dangers. However, we in An Garda Síochána are acutely conscious that our policing colleagues in Northern Ireland are confronted with the risk of being targeted and murdered precisely because they have chosen to serve their community in a police uniform.

Our commitment is to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Northern Ireland colleagues to face down the threat from paramilitaries and

criminals on this island who would seek to return our communities to a dark and violent past.

In fact An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland have no greater priority than making sure they won't succeed. For as long as these groups remain a threat, they will be met by an unprecedented unity of purpose among the members of An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, underpinned by practical cooperation at its highest ever levels.

Exchanges and Secondments

The cooperation and sharing of experience between the two police services has been greatly enhanced by short-term exchanges between members from both organisations, joint training initiatives and, more recently, the secondment of a Garda Superintendent to the Police Service of Northern Ireland who has just returned to us in the past few months.

These steps are evidence of the way in which our strategic approach is enhanced by practical measures.

In concluding I would say simply this: as police officers, we will continue to work together for the benefit of the communities we serve to ensure that, on both sides of the Border, people can feel safe in their homes, on our streets and on our roads. That is the best contribution we can make to building and sustaining peace.

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