

**Statement to the Permanent Council of 18 March 2010**

**Recent Developments in Northern Ireland**

Mr Chairman,

I should like to make the following statement on behalf of Ireland and the United Kingdom, in accordance with our ongoing commitment to keep the Permanent Council informed of significant developments in the peace process in Northern Ireland.

I am pleased to inform delegations that, on 9 March, the Northern Ireland Assembly voted overwhelmingly to approve the transfer of policing and justice powers to Northern Ireland, as provided for under the Good Friday and St. Andrews Agreements. The devolution of these powers will be completed on 12 April.

In a joint statement, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown and the Taoiseach, Brian Cowen very much welcomed the cross-community vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly saying that “it was a significant step forward for the people of Northern Ireland, with overwhelming support from all sections of the community.” They congratulated all those who contributed to this important decision, adding: “It sends a clear message of confidence in the future, and commitment to build on the gains of the peace process that have been achieved over the last 12 years.”

The devolution of policing and justice powers is a major milestone in the post-conflict transformation of Northern Ireland into a peaceful and stable society, where local democracy is working for the people. It is a testament to the real commitment of its political leadership to implementing in full the Good Friday and St Andrews Agreements. We thank participating States for their steadfast support and interest in the Northern Ireland peace process to date. We believe that it offers hope to other societies in the OSCE area which suffer from violence and division that the peaceful settlement of disputes offers lasting benefits for all.

Thank you Mr Chairman.