



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 4 May 2010

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EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

7th Meeting 2010, Session 3

CONVENER

*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab)

*Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD)

*Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con)

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lynn Tullis

Simon Watkins

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

European and External Relations Committee

Tuesday 4 May 2010

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:30*]

Decisions on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Irene Oldfather): Good morning and welcome to the seventh meeting in 2010 of the European and External Relations Committee. I have received apologies from Patricia Ferguson, Jamie Hepburn and Jim Hume.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take business in private. Do members agree to take in private item 5, which is consideration of our draft report on the Lisbon treaty?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Item 2 is another decision on taking business in private. Do members agree to take in private item 6, which is on our annual report, and item 7, which is consideration of our informal planning session on our future workload?

Members indicated agreement.

Scottish Government Correspondence

10:31

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is Scottish Government correspondence. We have received letters that the committee asked for from Fiona Hyslop, the Minister for Culture and External Affairs, so I thought that it would be worth while putting them on the agenda. The first letter from Fiona Hyslop relates to Scottish Government ministers' attendance at meetings of the Council of the European Union. The second is on the international engagement policy and contains information that the committee sought—when Michael Matheson was in the chair—on education opportunities in Taiwan and on the Scottish universities international group. We have a third letter on the China plan.

Do colleagues have any comments?

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): I suspect that a couple of issues that arise can be picked up in our international engagement inquiry, particularly on the surveillance work that Scottish Development International carries out and how it identifies priority areas.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I echo Michael Matheson's point. On education, SDI has a project called EDGE—encouraging dynamic global entrepreneurship—which appears to be successful. I have done a bit of background work on it and it appears that it involves people from America and other areas coming to Scotland. It would be interesting to examine the project; I do not know whether it benefits Scottish students or only American students who come to Scotland. I would like to include that in our inquiry.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I will just point out one wee thing for the committee's information. A Scottish Parliament cross-party group on Taiwan has recently emerged. That is possibly of interest to members. Through Tom McCabe, I have asked the cross-party group on China to consider inviting the Taiwanese representative in Edinburgh to come to a meeting of that group so that it hears a viewpoint from Taiwan. Despite the diplomatic differences, we should not exclude Taiwan from our thinking as we press ahead with our international plan. We should consider Taiwan, albeit that we should consider it differently from other countries with which we deal.

The Convener: Those are valid points.

The minister's letter refers specifically to the Scottish universities international group and suggests that we might like to write to it seeking

further information. Do members want to follow that up?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I know what Ted Brocklebank means. On that point, Lewis McNaughton and I met Mr Shu from Taiwan. It is important that we listen to all points of view and all sides on the issue.

Ted Brocklebank: It is worth mentioning that I saw something from the Taiwan Government recently that suggested that relations between Taiwan and China are probably in their best state for 60 years. We should do what we can in our own little way to encourage that development.

The Convener: It is worth our while to note that one of the recommendations in our committee report was to ask the Government to assist in facilitating the setting up of a toolkit on China. The minister's letter indicates that VisitScotland has specifically worked on that and has developed a China toolkit for Scottish tourism. That is a good example of the committee having a bit of influence and making a difference. Are members content to note the correspondence and to ask the clerks to follow through on the couple of items that members have raised?

Members *indicated agreement.*

“Brussels Bulletin”

10:36

The Convener: Agenda item 4 is our regular “Brussels Bulletin”. At our previous meeting, we discussed a number of the bulletin items on sport, and it was suggested that we refer one of the items to the Parliament's cross-party group on sport. Further to that, we felt that it might be useful to write to all cross-party groups to draw the bulletin to their attention, so we did that. We have informed them that it is available regularly on the Parliament website and that it may be of interest to particular cross-party groups. Do we agree to note the bulletin and to forward it to the relevant subject committees?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We previously agreed to take the rest of the agenda items in private.

10:37

Meeting continued in private until 12:05.

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