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Subject: QUAD | READOUT, 13 Oct

Date: Tue, 13 Oct 2020 12:03:46 +0100

QUAD | READOUT 13 OCTOBER

NI Secretary

Minister for Foreign Affairs

First Minister

Deputy First Minister

Minister Donnelly

Minister Swann

Declan Kearney

Secretary of State outlined the current UK wide picture on COVID, including the three tier approach that was being set out by the Prime Minister in the UK Parliament that day. He asked Minister Swann to set out how the current picture was in NI.

Minister Swann updated on the current increased community transmission across NI and increased incidence rates across NI. He briefly updated on ICU bed capacity and said that the Executive meeting tomorrow would look at a number of options around further restrictions.

Minister Donnelly provided an update on the current situation in Ireland. He said that the country had moved up to level 3 restrictions, whilst there had been a recommendation from NPHE to move to level 5. He said that they were experiencing exponential growth in a number of areas, although he did point out that the rapid growth in Dublin has eased off, but further understanding was needed for the reasoning behind that. He touched on the increased Gardai presence as they moved to Level 3 and said that they hoped to see a network effect of people following restrictions.

Secretary of State asked how long the Irish Government were viewing the lag time between a measure taking effect and the impact being felt.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that they were generally announcing in 3 week intervals, and taking the approach that if the figures did not get better in 3 weeks then they would look again at the trend before taking further decisions.

Deputy First Minister outlined concerns around rising cases and ICU capacity in NI. She spoke of the importance regarding taking a joined-up and aligned approach and said that the NI Executive will communicate with the Irish Government when they take decisions.

Secretary of State said that the UK 3 tiered system will have variations within it and the UK Government will work in conjunction with local leaders on the measures. He asked regarding the success of track and trace in border areas and the interoperability of the apps.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said the Irish Government were closely looking at the border areas, where case numbers seemed to be high.

Minister Swann said that from a test and trace point of view, the apps seem to be working well. He said that the level of international travel is mainly coming through Dublin into NI and that remains a concern for us. He also said that the lack of data sharing on those passengers can be difficult.

Minister Donnelly outlined how the apps should work on Test and Trace. He said that if there are any issues, he will work with colleagues to sort it. He said that the Irish Government wants to share the data if they can, although legally this had proven tricky.

Minister for Foreign Affairs outlined that Ireland would likely be seeing changes to its international travel policy, but they would not take effect until 20th. He said that working with the EU Commission on 'traffic light' approach, and they were likely to sign up at the General Affairs Council this week.

He briefly outlined the 'traffic light' system, which broadly categorised countries as Green (if 25 cases per 100k); Orange (if 50 cases per 100k); and, Red (if 150 cases per 150k). He said that he would send an update to the NI Executive tomorrow on any decisions taken. He flagged that some business people were accessing Dublin via Belfast, although this had admittedly been small. He said that they were looking at different ways to get a new normality back in international travel, for example tests prior to travelling internationally. He also said that he would speak to the Irish Attorney General again on data sharing.

He finally said that all were caught by surprise on PPE, ICU beds on the first wave. He said that this time around, as everyone knows what to expect, there should remain an open line of communication between Health Ministers and CMOs on resources etc.

Deputy First Minister said that cooperation was key and NI and Ireland could review the MoU to see if there were any areas for closer working.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that the more consistency, the better, on both sides of the border.

Secretary of State said that it was useful to continue to get together in this forum in the upcoming period.

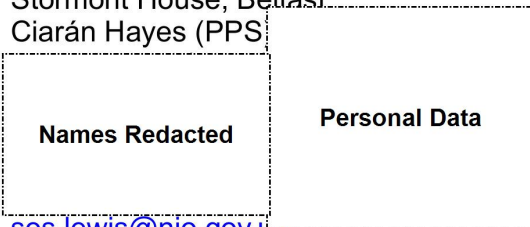
Minister for Foreign Affairs said not to expect any COVID decisions on Tuesday as they were focused on the budget.

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