

Ireland – France Joint Declaration

For adoption by Ministers Coveney and Le Drian

Ireland's relationship with France is one of enduring friendship and affinity going back centuries. The bonds are numerous and deep, whether our shared heritage dating back to Celtic and Norman times, the inspiration provided by the French Revolution to Ireland's own bid for independence or the collective sacrifice which both countries endured during World War I.

France and Ireland are two strong Partners within the European Union, with France now Ireland's closest EU neighbour. On the international stage, France and Ireland are collaborating closely together as members of the UN Security Council, seeking to promote those fundamental values which lie at the heart of the European project. Our political and economic relations are thriving, our people-to-people links strong and vibrant while culture remains at the heart of our connections.

The mutual desire is to take our relations to another level, including by drawing on the strategy document "Together in Spirit and Action" issued by Ireland in August 2019.

In recognition of this and in order to further strengthen and deepen relations between our two countries, we, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Ireland and France, agree to develop a substantive and strategic Joint Plan of Action for adoption in the second half of 2021.

As a first step, we today agree to:

-Cooperate at the diplomatic level:

1. Initiate a new **structured dialogue** between our Foreign Ministries, with annual consultations between our EU Directors General, Political Directors, UN Directors, Africa Directors and MENA Directors. Set up an annual consultation between our Climate Ambassadors. A first round of dialogue will take place ahead of France's Presidency of the EU council in 2022.
2. Continue close cooperation at the UN, including during Ireland's term as a member of the **Security Council**, with a view to strengthening effective multilateralism and the rules-based multilateral order.
3. Continue to work closely together on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) French Irish Mission **Internship Programme** (FIMIP) in Geneva. This programme is available primarily to missions of LDCs and small and vulnerable economies and focused on Geneva-based missions. It is part of the trade related technical assistance (TRTA) support by the two countries.

4. Continue our cooperation in the promotion and protection of the rule of law and of **human rights** in multilateral fora, including at the Human Rights Council and through the European Union and Council of Europe.

5. Establish a programme to **exchange civil servants** and diplomats between our administrations. As a first step, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland will send an official to ENA.

6. Continue to work together with other Foreign Ministries to promote the **sustainability** agenda within our Ministries, including at mission level.

7. As Ireland expands its Embassy network in Africa, particularly in West Africa, France will provide support (coordination, dialogue, information sharing).

-Cooperate at the educational and cultural level:

8. Agree to support initiatives to promote the **French language** and francophone culture in Ireland, including in the education system. We will launch a network to promote the French language among Irish civil servants. We will strengthen the links between Ireland and the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF). The celebration of the International Day of the Francophonie should be a key moment of cooperation. The promotion of the French language will be a key element of the strategic Joint Plan of Action.

9. Deepen our cultural cooperation by intensifying regular consultation between the Cultural Sections of our Embassies and between our Cultural Directors, with a view to planning future joint projects and programmes, and engaging new, varied and younger audiences across both countries.

10. Deepen our **research** ties and hold an Ireland-France seminar to promote the agreement in place between the Irish Research Council and the French Government, including widening the funding from national strategic partners and preparing researchers to tackle Horizon Europe funding, in particular on the themes of global public goods, health, digital and sustainable growth.

11. Strengthen **policy dialogue** between Irish and French think tanks, experts, academics on key issues of mutual interest, including European affairs.

-Cooperate at the economic and customs level:

12. Continue to work together to promote **direct maritime links** between our two countries and to maximise the opportunities presented by these links for business, trade, tourism and exchanges between our peoples.

13. Strengthen technical cooperation between all relevant Departments on issues relating to post-Brexit trades flows including goods moving between Ireland and France both directly and via the UK landbridge.

14. Reaffirm our joint support for the Celtic Interconnector between Cork and Brittany. This direct electricity link between Ireland and France, its closest EU neighbour, will be instrumental for EU energy market integration, renewable electricity sources development, solidarity and security of supply. The project promoters, EirGrid and RTE France - the electricity transmission and system operators in Ireland and France - have recently achieved a significant milestone on the project procurement through the issuing specifications to suppliers that will ultimately build the project when consented in both Ireland and France.

This project is fully in line with the process of energy transition, the fight against climate change, the EU's ambitious cross border interconnection targets, and ending Ireland's energy isolation.

-Cooperate at the decentralised level for citizens:

15. Strengthen even further the ties between **our people**, especially through cooperation between towns and other local authorities and institutions. A gathering of representatives of Irish and French local authorities will be organized with the support of our two governments. Taking stock of existing cooperation, it will aim to launch cooperation partnerships between local authorities, especially on sustainable growth, education, research and innovation, culture and language.

Finally, today we agree to develop a **strategic Joint Plan of Action** between our two countries that will take our engagement to a new level, including towards the aim of strengthening bilateral cooperation on EU and foreign policy, fostering cooperation on sustainable growth and developing further strong economic and cultural ties, including in relation to language, education and research.