



FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

PRESS RELEASE

19 March 2010

Falkland Islands Delegation to attend European Union Forum for Overseas Countries & Territories

A delegation from the Falkland Islands, led by the Hon Roger Edwards MLA, is to attend the annual Forum for Overseas Countries & Territories of the European Union. The four-day event, which is to be held in Brussels from 23rd to 26th March, is arranged and paid for by the European Commission. The Forum will be attended by representatives of all 21 Overseas Countries & Territories. Mr Edwards, who is the portfolio holders for European Union affairs, will be accompanied by Ms Sukey Cameron, the Falkland Islands Government's official representative in London, and Mr Michael Poole, Senior Economic and Statistical Analyst.

The first day of the Forum is devoted to a Trade Workshop, focused on trade issues between the European Union and its Overseas Countries & Territories. Falklands representatives will be giving a presentation on Rules of Origin issues, the rules governing the importation of tariff-free goods into European Union members states from the Overseas Countries & Territories. The Annual General Meeting of the Overseas Countries & Territories Association is held the following day. The final two days comprise a series of meetings covering a wide range of issues, from trade and development funding, to environmental and political issues, and are attended by European Commission officials and representatives of those countries with overseas territories (Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom).

This year's Forum also provides an opportunity for the Overseas Countries & Territories Association to put its views forward on the new 'Overseas Association Decision', which is the document that governs the relationship between the European Union and its Overseas Countries & Territories. The current decision expires in 2013, and a new decision is to be drafted over the next 18 months in consultation among the European Commission, the 27 European Union members states and the 21 Overseas Countries & Territories.

Mr Edwards said before his departure on Friday 19th March, “I am looking forward to an interesting and fruitful series of meetings. There are four main reasons why the Falkland Islands send representatives to the Forum. First, to enhance communication between the EU and the OCTs. Second, to achieve a clearer understanding amongst OCTs about the financial assistance available from the Tenth European Development Fund. Third, to promote the economic and social development and self-reliance of OCTs within the global economy. And finally, to ensure better co-operation and co-ordination on sustainable development strategies suitable for OCTs.

I will also be attending an event organised by the European Parliament for OCT representatives, at which I look forward to repeating our right of self-determination and our right to peacefully exploit our natural resources within and under the seas surrounding our islands. The Falkland Islands Government is keen to engage with MEPs to gauge the level of interest in the formation of an All Party Falkland Islands Group within the European Parliament.

Along with my colleagues I have a number of side meetings arranged, to co-ordinate payment by the European Commission to the Falkland Islands Government of the € 4.13 million assigned to the Falkland Islands under the current European Development Fund round. The Falkland Islands are very fortunate to have benefited from funding from the European Union over the past decade, and we have a responsibility to ensure the money is used wisely for the long-term benefit of all.”

Prior to travelling to Brussels on 22nd March, Mr Edwards, together with Mr Drew Irvine of the Falkland Islands Vessel Owners Association, will be meeting with representatives of the UK’s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to discuss Rules of Origin issues for the Falkland Islands fishing industry and to lobby the British government to support the Falkland Islands Government’s position. The following week, on 30th March, Mr Edwards is also due to visit the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for a general discussion on Falklands issues.

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