

LAUNCH OF CONSULAR ASSOCIATION AT STORMONT PARLIAMENT

May 20, 2009

Belfast, NORTHERN IRELAND: The Consular Association of Northern Ireland (CA-NI) was formally launched today at Stormont Parliament, kindly sponsored by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mr William Hay MLA.

Invited guests included Diplomats from the various Embassies and High Commissions in London, who have representation in Northern Ireland, Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Dignitaries, Heads of government and non-government Departments/Bodies, media and other stakeholders.



L to R: John Dallat – Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Gerry McClure, Regine McCullough, Donald Price, Bill Sinnerton, Carson McMullan, Jerome Mullen, Milan Mladek, Tom Sullivan, Lord Rana, Lynne Zeller, The Hon. Markku Keinanen, Franziska Hewitt, Cecilia Whiteside, Maurice Maxwell, Prasenjit Gupta, Dr Christopher Stange, Richard Holmes, Nicholas Lestas, Margaret Lee

In the past, the Consular Group has been brought together in a less formal capacity, through the combined efforts and support of the Belfast City Council (BCC), British Council (BC), European Commission (EC) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).

The expanding multiculturalism, peace, stability, economic regeneration and the Devolvement of government in Northern Ireland has lead to the establishment and need for Good Relations, development and engagement locally, regionally and internationally. To meet this rising

demand and the growing variety of Foreign Nationals that actively enrich and participate in Northern Ireland society, the decision was made to formally establish the Consular Association of Northern Ireland, serving all Consuls of Foreign Diplomatic representation in Northern Ireland.

Dr Christopher Stange, Honorary Consul for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in Northern Ireland, as Committee Member of the Consular Association, whom was tasked with heading and organising this launch, was delighted to see all the efforts lead us to this milestone today at Stormont Parliament.

Lord Diljit Rana, Honorary Consul for India in Northern Ireland, was recently elected President of the newly formed Consular Association of Northern Ireland (CA-NI).

CA-NI members include both Honorary and Career Consuls. According to the most recent Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular List in Northern Ireland, there are now 28 Foreign Countries represented, comprised of a mixture of both European Union and International Nations.

Guest speakers of the event included: Mr John Dallat MLA, Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mr Maurice Maxwell, Head of the European Commission Office in Belfast, Lord Rana and Dr Christopher Stange.

"Maurice Maxwell welcomed this initiative as representing a significant step in improving the ability of Consular representatives in Northern Ireland to coordinate their activities for the mutual benefit of the countries they represent and the local community".

Lord Rana explained: "The Consular Corps in Northern Ireland now reflects a very broad range of experience, and the resources which its members can command are used to benefit many sections of the public and private sector, as well as assistance to visitors who come here on business or for pleasure."

"Consuls assist in fostering economic, development and cultural ties between Northern Ireland and the countries they have been appointed to represent."

"Dr Stange highlighted: "CA-NI has been formed to provide a platform for an ongoing dialogue and exchange of experience and knowledge between Consuls and various agencies across Northern Ireland, particularly in terms of the services they are called upon to provide to people from the countries they represent and others who may need their advice and guidance. There is much that we can learn from each other about a Consul's work and responsibilities."

"They will also respond as they think appropriate to the needs of businesses, community groups, individuals and Diaspora, whose international outreach they may be able to assist," he added.

NOTES TO EDITOR:

- Consular Association of Northern Ireland (CA-NI) website: www.ca-ni.org
- For further information contact: Dr Christopher G. Stange, Hon. Consul for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in Northern Ireland, 16-18 Glen Road, Comber, Co. Down, BT23 5EL, Tel: 028 9187 4697, Fax: 028 9187 0792, Mobile: 07803 897487, E-mail: consul@svgconsulate.co.uk.

- **President:** Lord Diljit Rana – Hon. Consul for India to Northern Ireland
- **Vice President:** Mr Milan Mladek – Hon. Consul for Czech Republic to Northern Ireland
- **Secretariat:** Ms Cecilia Whiteside – Hon. Consul for Portugal to Northern Ireland
- **Treasurer:** Mr Donald Price – Hon. Consul for Denmark to Northern Ireland
- **Committee Member:** Dr Christopher Stange – Hon. Consul for St. Vincent and the Grenadines to Northern Ireland
- Consuls are appointed to further the interests of the country they represent by encouraging commercial, academic and cultural activities. They also endeavour to assist, and protect the interests of their nationals. All their work is done within the terms of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), an International Protocol which was drafted and agreed by the International Law Commission, and signed by the respective Governments on 24th April 1963.
- Consul Generals, Consuls, and other Consular Officials in Northern Ireland, whether they are Career Consuls or Honorary (Hon.) Consuls, are all appointed by the Governments of the Sending States to an Embassy/High Commission or other Diplomatic Representation in the United Kingdom. Each appointee receives a Letter of Commission which is recognised by the Government of the United Kingdom via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), as conferring Consular standing in accordance with the VCCR.