

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Micheál Martin, T.D., announces €2.3million for construction of a new Irish Arts Centre in New York as a key outcome from Global Irish Economic Forum

7 December 2009

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, T.D., today announced a grant for a landmark Irish project in New York. Minister Martin said that a total of €2.3 million will be provided immediately towards the construction of a state of the art Irish Arts Centre in Manhattan.

The Minister said one of the main themes to emerge from the attendees at the Global Irish Economic Forum was the importance of Irish Culture to the image of this country abroad and in particular in the USA. He noted that this was also an important conclusion of the Strategic Review of Ireland US Relations, published by the Taoiseach last March. Minister Martin said he was extremely impressed by the arguments made at Farmleigh by members of the business and cultural sectors alike.

Announcing the grant from the Emigrant Support Programme managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Minister said:

“The allocation of such significant funding is a clear demonstration of the Government’s strong commitment to the building of the new Irish Arts Centre in New York. This funding is a response to the extraordinary gesture of the City of New York in making a site, valued at \$12 million available for the project, along with a further \$8 million in capital funding.

The construction of the New York Irish Arts Centre is identified as a priority in the revised Programme for Government and I would like to pay tribute to Minister Martin Cullen for his longstanding support and commitment to the project.

The new Centre will project a dynamic image of Ireland and Irish America across the US; it will facilitate extensive Irish-related cultural, business and community programmes; will showcase quality contemporary Irish theatre and art; and will also provide an invaluable resource for the Irish emigrant community in the US”.

The Minister paid warm tribute to New York City Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Christine Quinn for their exceptional support for the initiative. He also thanked Gabriel Byrne for his support for the Arts Centre and for his longstanding work in promoting Irish culture throughout the US.

Minister Martin said that this major initiative demonstrates how seriously the Government views the outcome of the Farmleigh Forum:

“Everybody at Farmleigh said that the success of the Conference could only be judged by the quality of the follow up. Today I have begun to demonstrate that despite the difficult budgetary situation, we are determined to continue investing in our unique resource- the Irish Diaspora and its cultural heritage.

This is just the beginning and I will be making further announcements in the New Year. Other ideas which are being actively progressed include: a new Global Irish Network; the establishment of an Irish innovation centre in Silicon Valley; the Gateway Ireland portal, which would serve as a key online focus for promoting Ireland abroad and engaging with our global community; expanded educational exchange and scholarship programmes to increase engagement with younger generations; and a new Farmleigh Overseas Graduate Programme. I am aware that a number of other Departments are also taking forward initiatives suggested at Farmleigh. I am similarly encouraged by the fact that significant work has already been undertaken by participants themselves on a number of projects that are more suitably advanced by the private sector. These will have the support of the Government.”

He pointed out that at its meeting on 13 October, the Government considered a comprehensive report prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Irish Management Institute. The full report contains a detailed list of the main themes and specific proposals to emerge and is available on (www.dfa.ie and www.globalirishforum.ie).

The Government has also established a new inter-Departmental Committee, chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Taoiseach, to consider the proposals and monitor progress across Departments. The Committee has already begun its work and will report to Government in the New Year.

The Minister emphasised that the Government is absolutely committed to engagement with the Irish Diaspora across all regions and all sectors:

“Through the Emigrant Support Programme, we will continue to offer support to all sections of our Diaspora. In addition to the increased economic element to our work arising from the recent Forum, I am determined to ensure that we continue to attach a high priority to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable members of the Irish abroad.”

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7th December 2009

Press Office