



**News Release**

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## **DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS: IT'S TIME TO REBALANCE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROSECUTORS AND POLICE**

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Barra McGrory, QC has signalled that it is time to rebalance the relationship between prosecutors and police in Northern Ireland.

Speaking at the opening of the 21st International Association of Prosecutors Annual Conference (IAP) in Dublin, the Director said: "It has been one of my aspirations to reposition the role of the prosecutor, to bring them closer to the investigator and investigations.

"I want to empower my staff to act proactively rather than reactively in their relationships with investigators.

"I am committed to ensuring that in our post conflict context I deliver a prosecution service which is truly independent, fair and effective and in which all of the citizens of Northern Ireland can have confidence."

He highlighted the positive outcomes of a recent pilot project which focused on close and early engagement between prosecutors and police in number of serious cases. These included:

- 67% reduction in average investigation, file preparation and submission time (down from 174 to 58 days);
- 89% reduction in time from receipt of file to PPS decision (down from 172 to 19 days); and,
- 49% reduction in time from PPS decision to case being transferred to the Crown Court (down from 45 to 23 days).

Mr McGrory outlined the existing statutory duty on prosecutors to provide advice to investigators on demand and highlighted the benefits of strengthening this support through a more proactive approach.

He said: "Prosecutor engagement can result in evidential gaps and problems being addressed early, reduce delay down the line, lessen the likelihood of holding charges being withdrawn and assist the identification of any weaknesses which may result in a case being stopped pre-trial."

Mr McGrory also reflected on his use of the power to request the provision of information from the Chief Constable about "any matter" which appears to him to need investigation on the ground that it may involve an offence against the law of Northern Ireland, under Section 35 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

He said: "I treat requests to the Chief Constable to investigate cases with great care and have invoked these powers in a number of significant cases, most of which concern allegations of grave misconduct on the part of agencies of the state during the course our conflict.

"Four of these directions alone, one issued by my late predecessor, Sir Alasdair Fraser QC, and three by me, concern the handling of a single state agent code named Stakeknife. If substantiated these allegations open up an appalling vista of collusion by the state.

"These specific legislative provisions create an important public accountability mechanism, in conformity with human rights obligations and serve to protect the rule of law."

He added: "This does not mean however, the prosecutor having responsibility or accountability for the investigation or the deployment of police resources. I am satisfied that where both parties understand the sensitive interface between prosecution and investigation, it can be pursued without impairing the essential independence of either."

Mr McGrory concluded: "The political stability in Northern Ireland owes much to the tenacity and wisdom of our political leaders who have found a way to work together. Its future however will also depend in part on the extent to which the rule of law is maintained through the fair and impartial administration of criminal justice.

"Our next task in the north of Ireland, and it is a formidable one, is to work with police to roll out across the jurisdiction the processes developed in our pilot scheme, to make this one of the best and most effective criminal justice systems in the world."

More than 500 prosecutors representing 90 countries from around the world are attending the IAP Conference, hosted by the Director for Public Prosecutions in Ireland at the Convention Centre Dublin. The conference formally opened on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September and will run until Thursday (15<sup>th</sup> September).

The IAP is the only worldwide organisation of prosecutors. It is committed to setting and raising standards of professional conduct and ethics for prosecutors worldwide; promoting the rule of law, fairness, impartiality and respect for human rights and improving international cooperation to combat crime. The theme for the conference is 'The Relationship Between The Prosecutor And The Investigator' and features contributions from Claire Loftus DPP in Ireland, Alison Saunders DPP of England and Wales as well as senior prosecutors from around the world.

### ***Notes to Editors***

1. For Media Enquiries about the Director of Public Prosecutions' speech please contact the PPS Communications Unit on 02890897187, out of hours officer on 07990 031568 or email: [ppspressooffice@ppsni.gov.uk](mailto:ppspressooffice@ppsni.gov.uk).
2. For more information on the International Association of Prosecutors Annual Conference, please contact [media.liaison@dppireland.ie](mailto:media.liaison@dppireland.ie)
3. The IAP is the only worldwide organisation of prosecutors. It is committed to setting and raising standards of professional conduct and ethics for prosecutors worldwide; promoting the rule of law, fairness, impartiality and respect for human rights and improving international cooperation to combat crime.