

Country/entity	Ireland United Kingdom Northern Ireland
Region	Europe and Eurasia
Agreement name	Joint Declaration Issued by The Prime Minister Rt John Major MP and the Taoiseach Mr Albert Reynolds TD (Downing Street Declaration)
Date	15 Dec 1993
Agreement status	Multiparty signed/agreed
Interim arrangement	Yes
Agreement/conflict level	Interstate/intrastate conflict(s)

Northern Ireland Conflict (1968 - 1998)

Commonly referred to as ‘the Troubles’, the most recent conflict over the territory of Northern Ireland can be framed as beginning in 1968 and ending with the Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) in 1998. While the genesis of the conflict was closely related to pressures for the state to reform with relation to discrimination against the (minority) Catholic population, the core issue of the conflict as it proceeded was the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, which was contested between the unionist/loyalist (mostly Protestant) majority, who wanted the territory to remain as part of the United Kingdom, and the nationalist/republican (mostly Catholic) minority, whose goal was to unite the six provincial counties with the Republic of Ireland. The thirty years prior to the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement were marked by inter-communal violence, active paramilitary groups, and the deployment of the British army in the province. Mediation by international actors, and dialogue between the British and Irish governments, and between the IRA and its representatives and the British Government eventually resulted in a ceasefire respected by the majority of combatants. Talks led to the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement which established a power-sharing system of governance between nationalist and unionist communities.

Close
Northern Ireland Conflict (1968 - 1998)

Stage	Pre-negotiation/process
Conflict nature	Government/territory
Peace process	Northern Ireland peace process
Parties	The Taoiseach, Mr. Albert Reynolds, TD; the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Major MP
Third parties	-
Description	Declaration by the Taoiseach and Prime Minister setting out principles for a charter for peace and reconciliation, including the principle of consent and self-determination.

Agreement document

[UK_IE_931215_Downing Street Declaration.pdf \(opens in new tab\)](#) | [Download PDF](#)

Groups

Children/youth No specific mention.

Disabled persons No specific mention.

Elderly/age No specific mention.

Migrant workers No specific mention.

Racial/ethnic/national group Groups→Racial/ethnic/national group→Anti-discrimination
Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, sex or colour.

Religious groups Groups→Religious groups→Anti-discrimination
Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, sex or colour.

Indigenous people No specific mention.

Other groups No specific mention.

Refugees/displaced persons No specific mention.

Social class Groups→Social class→Anti-discrimination
Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, sex or colour.

Gender

Women, girls and gender Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, sex or colour.

Men and boys No specific mention.

LGBTI No specific mention.

Family No specific mention.

State definition

Nature of state (general)

Page 1, 2.

The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister are convinced of the inestimable value to both their peoples, and particularly for the next generation, of healing divisions in Ireland and of ending a conflict which has been so manifestly to the detriment of all. Both recognise that the ending of divisions can come about only through the agreement and co-operation of the people, North and South, representing both traditions in Ireland. They therefore make a solemn commitment to promote co-operation at all levels on the basis of the fundamental principles, undertakings, obligations under international agreements, to which they have jointly committed themselves, and the guarantees which each Government has given and now reaffirms, including Northern Ireland's statutory constitutional guarantee. It is their aim to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island, and between these islands.

Page 3, 6.

The Taoiseach however recognises the genuine difficulties and barriers to building relationships of trust either within or beyond Northern Ireland, from which both traditions suffer. He will work to create a new era of trust, in which suspicion of the motives and actions of others is removed on the part of either community. He considers that the future of the island depends on the nature of the relationship between the two main traditions that inhabit it. Every effort must be made to build a new series of trust between those communities. In recognition of the fears of the Unionist community and as a token of his willingness to make a political contribution to the building up of that necessary trust, the Taoiseach will examine with his colleagues any elements in the democratic life and organisation of the Irish State that can be represented to the Irish Government in the course of political dialogue as a real and substantial threat to their way of life and ethos, or that can be represented as not being fully consistent with a modern democratic and pluralist society, and undertakes to examine any possible ways of removing such obstacles. Such an examination would of course have due regard to the desire to preserve those inherited values that are largely shared throughout the island or that belong to the cultural and historical roots of the people of this island in all their diversity. The Taoiseach hopes that over time a meeting of hearts and minds will develop, which will bring all the people of Ireland together, and will work towards that objective, but he pledges in the meantime that as a result of the efforts that will be made to build mutual confidence no Northern Unionist should ever have a fear in future that this ideal will be pursued either by threat or coercion.

State configuration No specific mention.

Self determination Page 1-2, 4.

The Prime Minister, on behalf of the British Government, reaffirms that they will uphold the democratic wish of the greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland. On this basis, he reiterates, on the behalf of the British Government, that they have no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland. Their primary interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among all the people inhabit the island, and they will work together with the Irish Government to achieve such an agreement, which will embrace the totality of relationships. The role of the British Government will be to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of such agreement over a period through a process of dialogue and co-operation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland. They accept that such agreement may, as of right, take the form of agreed structures for the island as a whole, including a united Ireland achieved by peaceful means on the following basis. The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish. They reaffirm as a binding obligation that they will, for their part, introduce the necessary legislation to give effect to this, or equally to any measure of agreement on future relationships in Ireland which the people living in Ireland may themselves freely so determine without external impediment. They believe that the people of Britain would wish, in friendship to all sides, to enable the people of Ireland to reach agreement on how they may live together in harmony and in partnership, with respect for their diverse traditions, and with full recognition of the special links and the unique relationship which exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

Page 2, 5.

The Taoiseach, on behalf of the Irish Government, considers that the lessons of Irish history, and especially of Northern Ireland, show that stability and well-being will not be found under any political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on grounds of identity by a significant minority of those governed by it. For this reason, it would be wrong to attempt to impose a united Ireland, in the absence of the freely given consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. He accepts, on behalf of the Irish Government, that the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland and must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...

Page 3, 7.

Both Governments accept that Irish unity would be achieved only by those who favour this outcome persuading those who do not, peacefully and without coercion or violence, and that, if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland are so persuaded, both Governments will support and give legislative effect to their wish. But, notwithstanding the solemn affirmation by both Governments in the Anglo-Irish Agreement that any change in the status of Northern Ireland, would only come about with a consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the Taoiseach also recognises the continuing uncertainties and misgivings which dominate so much of Northern Unionist attitudes towards the rest of Ireland...

Referendum No specific mention.

State symbols No specific mention.

**Independence/
secession** No specific mention.

**Accession/
unification**

Page 1-2, 4.

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Border delimitation No specific mention.

Cross-border provision No specific mention.

Governance

Political institutions (new or reformed)	<p>Governance→Political institutions (new or reformed)→General references Page 4, 10.</p> <p>The British and Irish Governments reiterate that the achievement of peace must involve a permanent end to the use of, or support for, paramilitary violence. They confirm that, in these circumstances, democratically mandated parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they abide by the democratic process, are free to participate fully in democratic politics and to join in dialogue in due course between the Governments and the political parties on the way ahead.</p> <p>Page 4, 8.</p> <p>The British and Irish Governments will seek, along with the Northern Ireland constitutional parties through a process of political dialogue, to create institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest. This will help over a period to build the trust necessary to end past divisions, leading to an agreed and peaceful future. Such structures would, of course, include institutional recognition of the special links that exist between the peoples of Britain and Ireland as part of the totality of relationships, while taking account of newly forged links with the rest of Europe.</p>
Elections	No specific mention.
Electoral commission	No specific mention.
Political parties reform	No specific mention.
Civil society	No specific mention.
Traditional/religious leaders	No specific mention.
Public administration	No specific mention.
Constitution	<p>Governance→Constitution→Constitutional reform/making Page 3, 7.</p> <p>...The Taoiseach also acknowledges the presence in the Constitution of the Republic of elements which are deeply resented by Northern Unionists, but which at the same time reflect hopes and ideals which lie deep in the hearts of many Irish men and women North and South...He confirms that, in the event of an overall settlement, the Irish Government will, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland.</p>

Power sharing

Political power sharing No specific mention.

Territorial power sharing No specific mention.

Economic power sharing No specific mention.

Military power sharing No specific mention.

Human rights and equality

Human rights/RoL general No specific mention.

Bill of rights/similar No specific mention.

Treaty incorporation Page 1, 2.
...They therefore make a solemn commitment to promote co-operation at all levels on the basis of the fundamental principles, undertakings, obligations under international agreements, to which they have jointly committed themselves, and the guarantees which each Government has given and now reaffirms, including Northern Ireland's statutory constitutional guarantee...

Civil and political rights Human rights and equality→Civil and political rights→Equality
Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, sex or colour.
Human rights and equality→Civil and political rights→Thought, opinion, conscience and religion
Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right of free political thought; the right of freedom and expression of religion;...
Human rights and equality→Civil and political rights→Other
Page 2, 5.
...must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities, including:...the right to pursue democratically national and political aspirations; the right to seek constitutional change by peaceful and legitimate means; the right to live wherever one chooses without hindrance;...

Socio-economic rights No specific mention.

Rights related issues

Citizenship No specific mention.

Democracy Page 2, 5.
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Page 3, 6.

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Detention procedures No specific mention.

Media and communication No specific mention.

Mobility/access No specific mention.

Protection measures No specific mention.

Other No specific mention.

Rights institutions

NHRI No specific mention.

Regional or international human rights institutions No specific mention.

Justice sector reform

Criminal justice and emergency law No specific mention.

State of emergency provisions No specific mention.

Judiciary and courts No specific mention.

Prisons and detention No specific mention.

Traditional Laws No specific mention.

Socio-economic reconstruction

Development or socio-economic reconstruction No specific mention.

National economic plan No specific mention.

Natural resources No specific mention.

International funds No specific mention.

Business No specific mention.

Taxation No specific mention.

Banks No specific mention.

Land, property and environment

Land reform/rights No specific mention.

**Pastoralist/
nomadism rights** No specific mention.

Cultural heritage No specific mention.

Environment No specific mention.

**Water or riparian
rights or access** No specific mention.

Security sector

**Security
Guarantees** No specific mention.

Ceasefire No specific mention.

Police No specific mention.

Armed forces No specific mention.

DDR No specific mention.

**Intelligence
services** No specific mention.

**Parastatal/rebel
and opposition
group forces** Page 4, 10.
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**Withdrawal of
foreign forces** No specific mention.

Corruption No specific mention.

**Crime/organised
crime** No specific mention.

Drugs No specific mention.

Terrorism No specific mention.

Transitional justice

Transitional justice Page 1, 1.

general

The Taoiseach, Mr. Albert Reynolds, TD and the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Major MP, acknowledge that the most urgent and important issue facing the people of Ireland, North and South, and the British and Irish Governments together, is to remove the conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions which have resulted, recognising the absence of a lasting and satisfactory settlement of relationships between the peoples of both islands has contributed to continuing tragedy and suffering. They believe that the development of an agreed framework for peace, which has been discussed between them since early last year, and which is based on a number of key principles articulated by the two Governments over the past 20 years, together with adaptation of other widely accepted principles, provides the starting point of a peace process designed to culminate in a political settlement.

Amnesty/pardon No specific mention.

Courts No specific mention.

Mechanism No specific mention.

Prisoner release No specific mention.

Vetting No specific mention.

Victims No specific mention.

Missing persons No specific mention.

Reparations

No specific mention.

Reconciliation

Page 1, 2.

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Page 1-2, 4.

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Page 3-4, 7.

...He [the Taoiseach] He asks the people of Northern Ireland to look on the people of the Republic as friends, who share their grief and shame over all the suffering of the last quarter of a century, and who want to develop the best possible relationship with them, a relationship in which trust and new understanding can flourish and grow. But as we

Implementation

UN signatory No specific mention.

Other international signatory No specific mention.

Referendum for agreement No specific mention.

International mission/force/similar No specific mention.

Enforcement mechanism 11. The Irish Government would make their own arrangements within their jurisdiction to enable democratic parties to consult together and share in dialogue about the political future. The Taoiseach's intention is that these arrangements could include the establishment, in consultation with other parties, of a Forum for Peace and Reconciliation to make recommendations on ways in which agreement and trust between both traditions in Ireland can be promoted and established.

Related cases No specific mention.

Source Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, copy on file with the author.
