

Country/entity	Ireland United Kingdom Northern Ireland
Region	Europe and Eurasia
Agreement name	Northern Ireland: Ground Rules for Substantive All-Party Negotiations
Date	15 Mar 1996
Agreement status	Multiparty signed/agreed
Interim arrangement	Yes
Agreement/conflict level	Intrastate/intrastate conflict

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	British and Irish Governments

Third parties

-

Description

The Consultation Paper sets out proposal for negotiations between the two Governments and the relevant political parties in NI on the basis, participation, structure, format and agenda of all-party negotiations. The negotiations are to operate on the basis of consensus.

Agreement document

[UK_IE_960315_Ground Rules for Substantive All-Party Negotiations.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→Substantive
Page 4, Format, 20.
...The rules for establishing sufficient consensus will be agreed in advance of negotiations by the participants and such rules will ensure that any departure from the rule of unanimity is within minimal limits and will, in all cases, ensure that any decision taken will be supported by a clear majority in both the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland...

Religious groups

No specific mention.

Indigenous people

No specific mention.

Other groups

No specific mention.

**Refugees/displaced
persons**

No specific mention.

Social class

No specific mention.

Gender

Women, girls and gender No specific mention.

Men and boys No specific mention.

LGBTI No specific mention.

Family No specific mention.

State definition

Nature of state (general) No specific mention.

State configuration No specific mention.

Self determination No specific mention.

Referendum No specific mention.

State symbols No specific mention.

Independence/secession No specific mention.

Accession/unification No specific mention.

Border delimitation No specific mention.

Cross-border provision No specific mention.

Governance

Political institutions (new or reformed) No specific mention.

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	No specific mention.

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	No specific mention.
Civil and political rights	No specific mention.
Socio-economic rights	No specific mention.

Rights related issues

Citizenship	No specific mention.
Democracy	Page 1, Agenda, 3. ...participation in negotiations is without prejudice to any participant's commitment to the achievement by exclusively peaceful and democratic means of its own preferred options... Page 3, Participation, 13. If, during the negotiations, any party demonstrably dishonoured its commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence by, for example, resorting to force or threatening the use of force to influence the course or the outcome of the negotiations, or failing to oppose the efforts of others to do so, it would no longer be entitled to participate in the negotiations.
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 Security sector→Ceasefire→Ceasefire provision
Page 2, Participation, 7.
In the communique of 28 February, both Governments expressed the hope that all parties with an electoral mandate will be able to participate in all-party negotiations. However, both Governments are also agreed that the resumption of Ministerial dialogue with Sinn Fein, and their participation in negotiations, requires the unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994.

Police No specific mention.

Armed forces No specific mention.

DDR No specific mention.

Intelligence services No specific mention.

Parastatal/rebel and opposition group forces No specific mention.

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 general No specific mention.

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	<p>Page 1, Agenda, 4.</p> <p>Both Governments, as signatories of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, reaffirm that they would be prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement, if that can be achieved through direct discussion and negotiation between all the parties concerned. They envisage that such an agreement would develop and extend their cooperation, reflect the totality of relationships between the two islands, and be dedicated to fostering cooperation, reconciliation and agreement in Ireland at all levels.</p>

Implementation

UN signatory	No specific mention.
Other international signatory	No specific mention.
Referendum for agreement	<p>Page 5, Validation, 22.</p> <p>Both Governments reaffirm their intention that the outcome of negotiations will be submitted for public approval by referendums in Ireland - North and South - before being submitted to their respective Parliaments for ratification and the earliest possible implementation.</p>
International mission/force/similar	No specific mention.
Enforcement mechanism	No specific mention.
