

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

<b>Stage</b>	Pre-negotiation/process
<b>Conflict nature</b>	Government/territory
<b>Peace process</b>	Northern Ireland peace process
<b>Parties</b>	The Taoiseach, Mr. Albert Reynolds, TD; the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Major MP
<b>Third parties</b>	-
<b>Description</b>	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.

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**Agreement document**

[UK\\_IE\\_931215\\_Downing Street Declaration.pdf \(opens in new tab\)](#) | [Download PDF](#)

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**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.

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**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.

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## **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.

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## Governance

<b>Political institutions (new or reformed)</b>	<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>
<b>Elections</b>	No specific mention.
<b>Electoral commission</b>	No specific mention.
<b>Political parties reform</b>	No specific mention.
<b>Civil society</b>	No specific mention.
<b>Traditional/religious leaders</b>	No specific mention.
<b>Public administration</b>	No specific mention.
<b>Constitution</b>	<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.

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## **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.  
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:...the right to pursue democratically national and political aspirations;...

Page 3, 6.

...In recognition of the fears of the Unionist community and as a token of his willingness to make a personal 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...

**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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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**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

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**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.

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