

**CONFIDENTIAL**

(2 December 1997)

**NORTHERN IRELAND: HEADS OF AGREEMENT**

1. A Northern Ireland Assembly, elected by a system of proportional representation, with responsibilities shared broadly in proportion to party strengths. Devolution of executive and legislative responsibility over at least the responsibilities of the six Northern Ireland Departments.
2. Provisions to safeguard the rights of both communities in Northern Ireland and address equality and justice issues.
3. A constitutional understanding, based on commitment to the principle of consent by both the British and Irish Governments, and including changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution (the territorial claim) and to British legislation as necessary.
4. Replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement with a new British-Irish Agreement to establish closer co-operation and enhanced relationships, embracing:
  - (a) A Council of these islands, to deal with the totality of relationships, including the British and Irish Governments, the Northern Ireland administration, and representatives of devolved institutions in the rest of the UK;
  - (b) A Council of Ministers for North/South co-operation with a significant role, able to agree on joint or complementary action on issues of mutual interest. The Council to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government. Each side to remain accountable to, and act within the mandate of, the NI Assembly and the Irish Parliament, respectively. All decisions to be by agreement between the two sides, North and South;
  - (c) Standing intergovernmental machinery (between the Irish and British governments) to discuss and resolve all issues of mutual interest, including but not limited to Northern Ireland.

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