

NORTHERN IRELAND: HEADS OF AGREEMENT

[SHORT TEXT]

A balanced constitutional understanding, based on commitment to principle of consent by both British and Irish Governments, and including changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution (the territorial claim).

A Northern Ireland Assembly, elected by a system of proportional representation. Devolution of executive and legislative responsibility over at least the responsibilities of the six Northern Ireland Departments.

Replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement with a new British-Irish Agreement to establish closer cooperation and enhanced relationships, embracing:

- 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;
- a Council for North/South cooperation, to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and Irish Government to consult on matters of mutual concern and interest. 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. Such decisions may result in agreed policies being implemented on a cross-border or North/South basis;

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These Councils to cooperate and consult on matters of mutual benefit and to act, where agreed, through the establishment of executive agencies to implement policies on a North-South basis.

- Standing intergovernmental machinery between the Irish and British Governments, covering issues of mutual interest, including non-devolved issues for Northern Ireland, when representatives of the Northern Ireland Administration would be involved.

Provisions to safeguard the rights of both communities in Northern Ireland and address equality and justice issues, through arrangements for the comprehensive protection of fundamental human, civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, and full respect for the principles of equity of treatment and freedom from discrimination, and the cultural identity and ethos of both communities.

Appropriate steps to ensure an equivalent level of protection in the Republic of Ireland to be taken.

Effective and practical measures to establish and consolidate a normal peaceful society, dealing with issues such as prisoners, security in all its aspects, policing and decommissioning of weapons.