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News story

Joint Communiqué of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

A meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) took place at Lancaster House, London, on 7 October 2022.

From:

[Northern Ireland Office \(/government/organisations/northern-ireland-office/\)](/government/organisations/northern-ireland-office/),
[Steve Baker \(/government/people/steve-baker/\)](/government/people/steve-baker/), and [The Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP \(/government/people/chris-heaton-harris/\)](/government/people/chris-heaton-harris/)

Published

7 October 2022



The Government of Ireland was represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Simon Coveney TD, and the Minister for Justice, Ms Helen McEntee TD. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was represented by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Chris Heaton Harris MP, and the Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Steve Baker MP.

The Conference was established under Strand Three of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement “to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of the UK and Irish Governments”.

The Conference discussed the following:

British-Irish Cooperation

The Irish and UK Governments agreed on the importance of strong British-Irish relations to address present day global challenges and unlock the significant economic potential of both countries.

The Conference discussed the ongoing work to enhance relations between the UK and Irish Governments. Attendees identified a range of high-value areas for deeper cooperation, with particular focus on cyber, energy, research and innovation.

Political Stability

The UK and Irish Governments reaffirmed their commitment to doing everything possible to facilitate the re-establishment of the Executive by 28 October and the full functioning of all of the political institutions established by the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement including the North South Ministerial Council. They agreed on the importance of respecting the Agreement in totality. They agreed this is what people in Northern Ireland expect and deserve. The Conference noted the ongoing discussions to address issues around the Northern Ireland Protocol and to find an agreed way forward. The Conference noted that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would come under a legal duty to call further elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly if the Executive is not restored by 28 October.

The Conference agreed to continue close co-operation in accordance with the three stranded approach established in the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement.

Security Co-operation

The Conference examined the current security situation in both jurisdictions. Both the UK Government and the Irish Government noted the importance of the ongoing high level of co-operation in tackling terrorism, paramilitarism and associated criminality. It considered the fourth report of the Independent Reporting Commission and its recommendations. The UK and Irish Governments expressed their thanks to the Commission for their ongoing work.

Rights and Citizenship Matters

The Conference discussed the Common Travel Area protections in the context of policy and legislative developments. The UK and Irish Governments reaffirmed their commitment to the reciprocal rights and privileges provided to UK and Irish citizens under the Common Travel Area.

The Conference also discussed recent developments and legislation relevant to the implementation of the rights and citizenship provisions of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement. An update was also provided on the implementation of the Nationality and Borders Act.

Legacy

The Conference discussed the approach to the legacy of Northern Ireland's past and the value of further engagement on this crucial issue, in particular the Irish Government's concerns with the UK Government's proposed legislation and how those concerns might be addressed. The UK and Irish Governments also discussed issues of concern in respect to a number of individual legacy cases.

25th Anniversary of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement

The Conference noted the 25th Anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement next year and agreed on the importance of collectively marking this historic moment.

Future Meetings

It was agreed that the Conference should meet again in January 2023.

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