

BRITISH-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE
INAUGURAL SUMMIT MEETING
LONDON, 17 DECEMBER 1999

1. The inaugural Summit meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, established under the British-Irish Agreement, 1998, was held at 10 Downing Street, London, on 17 December 1999.
2. The meeting was chaired jointly by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP and the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahearn, TD. The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Peter Mandelson, MP. The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Tanaiste, Ms Mary Harney, TD, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr David Andrews, TD, and the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr John O'Donoghue, TD. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented at the meeting by the First Minister, the Rt Hon David Trimble, MP, MLA and the Deputy First Minister, Mr Seamus Mallon, MP, MLA.
3. The establishment of the Conference was welcomed as a further step towards the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. The Conference noted that it would bring together the British and Irish Governments to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of both Governments. The Conference approved a Memorandum of Understanding regarding supplementary procedural arrangements relating to its operation. In line with the Good Friday Agreement, these arrangements relating to its operation. In line with the Good Friday Agreement, these arrangements involve representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive in the Conference.
4. The Conference noted that, in recognition of the Irish Government's special interest in Northern Ireland and of the extent to which issues of mutual concern arise in relation to Northern Ireland, there would be regular and frequent meetings of the Conference concerned with non-devolved Northern Ireland matters on

which the Irish Government might put forward views and proposals. Such meetings will be co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and will also deal with all-island and cross-border co-operation on non-devolved issues.

5. The Conference agreed an initial list of issues which will form a programme of work. In respect of bilateral co-operation, these include:-

- asylum and immigration, including Common Travel Area issues
- European Union and international issues
- Social security including methods of fraud detection
- Education
- Policy on misuse of drugs: combating organised crime and associated money laundering
- Fiscal issues.

6. In respect of non-devolved Northern Ireland matters, including any all-island or cross-border aspects, issues include:

- rights
- policing, including implementation of the Patten Report
- criminal justice
- normalisation of security arrangements and practices
- cross-border security co-operation
- victims of violence
- prisons issues
- drugs and drug trafficking
- broadcasting.

7. The Conference noted that either Government could propose other subjects for further study or discussion.

8. The Conference reviewed the current situation in Northern Ireland. It welcomed unreservedly the establishment of an inclusive Executive, and of the North/South

Ministerial Council, the Implementation Bodies and the British-Irish Council. It commended the role played by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and by the political parties in making these developments possible. Special tribute was also paid to Senator George Mitchell, whose review provided a basis for devolution to occur, for the institutions to be established, and for decommissioning to take place as soon as possible. Stressing the unprecedented opportunity now available for lasting peace and reconciliation, the Conference made clear its commitment to the full implementation of the Agreement in all its aspects. The Conference also affirmed its resolute determination to oppose all those who sought to achieve their political objectives by violence, or the threat of violence.

9. The Conference also reviewed bilateral co-operation between the two Governments and reaffirmed the importance of developing that co-operation for the benefit of all the people of these islands.
10. The Conference envisaged that its next meeting at Summit level would take place during the first half of 2000, and that its first meeting on non-devolved Northern Ireland matters would take place in January. It was agreed that meetings on other issues, including those arising from the Work Programme, would be arranged as necessary.

**Joint Secretariat
British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference
17 December 1999**

**BRITISH-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON SUPPLEMENTARY
PROCEDURAL ARRANGEMENTS**

1. Introduction

1.1 This Memorandum is made between the British and Irish Governments and constitutes a shared understanding regarding supplementary procedural arrangements relating to the operation of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

1.2 The Memorandum is an informal understanding and does not constitute a legally binding agreement. Nothing in it overrides the Multi-Party Agreement; nor does it have a bearing on those provisions of that Agreement concerning internal arrangements (constitutional, legislative or otherwise), in either jurisdiction, relating to democratic authority, accountability and the discharge and co-ordination of executive functions. Subject to that understanding, both sides will act in accordance with the procedures set out in the Memorandum.

2. Purpose of the Conference and Membership

2.1 The purpose and membership of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will be as set out in the Multi-Party Agreement. It will remain open to both Governments to conduct bilateral business outside the Conference.

3. Meetings of the Conference

- 3.1 The two Governments will decide on an initial schedule of meetings of the Conference including regular and frequent meetings relating to non-devolved Northern Ireland matters. Additional meetings of the Conference may be convened at the request of either Government.
- 3.2 The Conference will normally meet at Summit level at least twice a year.
- 3.3 The Conference may remit to be considered by appropriate Ministers or officials, including the Secretariat, any matter coming before it.
- 3.4 The Conference may convene at any location within the United Kingdom or Ireland as jointly determined by the two Governments.
- 3.5 The agenda for each Conference meeting will be jointly decided in advance by the two Governments through the Secretariat.

4. **Northern Ireland Administration**

- 4.1 Where non-devolved matters relating to Northern Ireland are to be discussed at a meeting of the Conference, the Northern Ireland First Minister and the Northern Ireland Deputy First Minister acting jointly will ensure that there is relevant cross-community attendance at the meeting by Northern Ireland Ministers and junior Ministers ('Northern Ireland administration representatives'). The failure to attend or non-participation of Northern Ireland administration representatives will not, however,

prevent the holding of a meeting of the Conference or otherwise affect its proceedings.

4.2 In accordance with the Multi-Party Agreement, the Conference will keep under review the workings of the British-Irish Agreement and the machinery and institutions established under it, including a formal published review three years after the Agreement comes into effect. Northern Ireland administration representatives will be invited to express views to the Conference in this context.

4.3 The Joint Secretariat will normally notify the First and Deputy First Minister no less than ten working days in advance of any Conference meetings and circulate an agenda no less than five working days in advance. The First Minister, the Deputy First Minister, and other members of the Northern Ireland Executive may make proposals concerning the agenda. However, it will be for the two Governments jointly to determine the content, order and format of Conference agenda.

4.4 Meetings of the Conference will normally begin with a bilateral session between the appropriate Ministers of the two Governments and their officials and advisers. When security-related matters are under discussion, such meetings may include police and security advisers and may be in restricted format. Where appropriate, the two Governments will subsequently give the Northern Ireland administration representatives, at the outset of the plenary sessions, a short oral report on discussions in the bilateral session.

- 4.5 Northern Ireland administration representatives may participate in discussion of all issues considered in the sessions which they attend. Officials of and advisers to Northern Ireland administration representatives may also attend.

5. **Statements of the Conference**

- 5.1 Any statements issued at the close of Conference meetings will be jointly decided by the two Governments. The two Governments will, where appropriate, take account of the views of the Northern Ireland administration representatives.

6. **Secretariat and Support**

- 6.1 The standing Joint Secretariat will be constituted and will, under the Multi-Party Agreement, operate in accordance with arrangements to be determined from time to time by the two Governments.
- 6.2 The Secretariat will provide support for the Conference, as appropriate, across its full remit to enable the Conference to carry out its functions. It may liaise as necessary with officials employed by or seconded to, or acting as support for the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council, the Implementation Bodies, those of any other bilateral arrangements between the two Governments concerning matters of particular relevance to Northern Ireland as well as with the relevant Departments of the British and Irish Governments.
- 6.3 The Secretariat will be based in Northern Ireland. The two Governments will also designate officials in London and Dublin to

support the work of the Secretariat, co-ordinate arrangements for Summit level meetings of the Conference and promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on matters of mutual interest.

7. Funding

7.1 The costs of each Conference meeting will be borne by the host Government with the travel and associated costs of Ministers, advisers and officials being borne by their respective Governments. The exception to this latter provision is the associated costs of Ministers, advisors and officials of the Northern Ireland Administration. These should be met directly from the funds of the Northern Ireland administration.

7.2 The two Governments will share the other costs arising from the operation of the Conference as well as the costs of the Joint Secretariat on an equitable basis to be determined by them.

8. Review and entry into operation

8.1 The arrangements in this Memorandum may be reviewed and varied by joint decision of the two Governments who will, where appropriate, take account of the views of the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, and of other members of the Northern Ireland Executive.

8.2 It will also be open to the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, and other members of the Northern Ireland Executive, to make proposals for changes in these arrangements in relation to the discussion of non-devolved Northern Ireland matters.