

1. The Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister 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 causes of conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions which have resulted, recognising that past failures to settle relationships between the people of both islands satisfactorily has led to continuing tragedy and suffering.
2. They consider that the development of European Union fundamentally changes the nature and the context of British-Irish relationships and will progressively remove the basis of the historic conflict still taking place in Northern Ireland. The challenges and opportunities of European Union will, of themselves, require new approaches to serve interests common to both parts of Ireland.
3. The Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister are convinced of the inestimable value to both their peoples 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 cooperation of the people, North and South, representing both traditions in Ireland. They therefore make a solemn commitment to promote cooperation at all levels. It is their aim to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing the whole island.
4. The British Prime Minister reiterates, on behalf of the British Government, that they have no selfish, strategic, political or economic interest in Northern Ireland, and that their sole interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation

established by agreement among the people who inhabit the island. The British Government accept the principle that the Irish people have the right collectively to self-determination, and that the exercise of this right could take the form of agreed independent structures for the island as a whole. They affirm their readiness to introduce the measures to give legislative effect on their side to this right over a period to be agreed by both Governments and allowing sufficient time for the building of consent and the beginning of a process of national reconciliation. The British Government will use all their influence and energy to win the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland for these measures. They acknowledge that it is the wish of the people of Britain to see the people of Ireland live together in unity and harmony, with respect for their diverse traditions, independent, but with full recognition of the special links and the unique relationship which exists between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

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- 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. 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 the agreement and consent of the people of Northern Ireland and must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and provide entrenched guarantees of the civil rights and religious liberties of both communities.

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- 6. The Irish Government accordingly commit themselves to working in the spirit and on the basis of the Report of the New Ireland Forum to create institutions

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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 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.

7. In the light of their joint commitment to promote the foregoing objectives, the Taoiseach has indicated to the British Prime Minister his intention of establishing a permanent Irish Convention to consult and advise on the steps required to remove the barriers of distrust which at present divide the people of Ireland and which stand in the way of the exercise in common by them of self-determination on a basis of equality. It will be open to the Convention to make recommendations on ways in which agreement, as defined in the Forum Report, and respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland, can be promoted and established. The Convention will be governed by the authority of Bunreacht na hEireann, and the institutions established under it. It will be a fundamental guiding principle of the Convention that all differences between the Irish people relating to the exercise in common of the right to self-determination will be resolved exclusively by peaceful, political means.
8. The Convention will be open to all democratically mandated political parties in Ireland which abide exclusively by the democratic process and wish to share in dialogue about Ireland's political future and the welfare of all its people.

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