

Good Friday Agreement



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

The Good Friday Agreement, signed 25 years ago on 10 April 1998 in Belfast, remains a remarkable achievement. The Agreement transformed this island by bringing and maintaining peace, and effectively marked the end of 30 years of violent conflict, which had claimed over 3,500 lives.

The Agreement is made up of two documents: a multi-party agreement by the majority of Northern Ireland's political parties and the British and Irish Governments, and an international agreement between the British and Irish Governments. There are three strands to the Agreement's framework: (I) the status and system of government of Northern Ireland; (II) the relationships north and south on this island; (III) the relationship between the British and Irish Governments.

In May 1998, the Agreement was democratically endorsed, in the north and south, by an overwhelming majority of voters. To this day, the Agreement continues to be the framework for peace on this island.

Delivering on [the promise of the Agreement remains a Government priority](#). Work continues to address the impact of the conflict on victims and their families, and to encourage the restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland. The Government's [Shared Island initiative](#) aims to harness the full potential of the Agreement, by enhancing cooperation, connection, and mutual understanding on the island, and by engagement with all its communities and traditions. Recently, mitigating the consequences of Brexit on Northern Ireland has required significant effort.

Resource

The Agreement enshrined several key commitments and principles, including: power-sharing; the principle of consent; police reform; disarmament and demilitarisation; cultural parity of esteem, and safeguarding of human rights.

To fully explore these, read the [full text \(35-pages\) of the Agreement](#)

Recommended Reading

[Ten key people who helped bring about peace in Northern Ireland](#)

(The Conversation)

[Why the 'Windsor Framework' Could Resolve Brexit's Thorniest Issue](#)

(TIME)

[Good Friday Agreement 'wouldn't have happened without the EU'](#)

(BBC)

Resource

In 2023, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (JCGFA) released a report

['Lessons from the Architects of the Good Friday Agreement'](#).

The document, a 'rallying cry for renewed commitment to mediation and reconciliation', includes explanations of how the negotiations succeeded, as well as a substantial chapter on the Agreement's future.

Key Moments

1985
[Anglo-Irish Agreement](#)

1993
[Joint Declaration \(Downing Street Declaration\)](#)

1994
[IRA ceasefire; Loyalist ceasefire](#); Framework document published

1996
IRA end their ceasefire; Multiparty talks begin

1997
IRA resume ceasefire; Sinn Féin enter multiparty talks; [Independent International Commission on Decommissioning](#)

1998
[Good Friday Agreement signed](#); Endorsed by referendums in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland on the same day in May

1999
NI Assembly established

2001
Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) established

2005
IRA announce end to armed campaign

2006 - 2020
2006: St Andrews Agreement
2010: Hillsborough Agreement
2014: Stormont House Agreement
2015: Fresh Start Agreement
2020: New Decade New Approach

Key Figures

Countless people - through activism, art and politics - contributed to making peace possible. We spotlight four peacemakers: three signatories of the Agreement — David Trimble; John Hume; and Monica McWilliams — and the poet Michael Longley.

Monica McWilliams (b. 1954)

In 1996, Monica McWilliams co-created the [Northern Ireland Women's Coalition \(NIWC\)](#), so that women could be 'written into, rather than out of' the peace talks. The NIWC organized women across Catholic-Protestant lines and formed a political party to gain formal access to the talks.

As peace agreements which [include women are 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15-years](#), the NIWC's contribution was essential: they introduced critical provisions on cross-community dialogue, provisions on cross-community dialogue, social

services, and human rights into the Agreement.

[Watch the 4-min video below to hear McWilliams' experience of the peace talks](#)



John Hume (1937 - 2020)

A founding member and leader of the [Social Democrat and Labour Party \(SDLP\)](#), who served as a MEP for Northern Ireland (1979-2004) and MP for Foyle (1983-2005).

Hume and Trimble [jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998](#) "for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland".

Hume also received the Gandhi Peace Prize and the Martin Luther King Award; the only person to receive the three major peace awards.

Following the Agreement, Hume said:

'We have succeeded not because we have challenged others. We have succeeded because we have

David Trimble (1946 - 2022)

As leader of the [Ulster Unionist Party \(UUP\)](#), from 1995, [Trimble sought a Northern Ireland](#) which would be "a normal and decent society, flawed as human beings are flawed."

Despite high-profile members of the UUP, Jeffrey Donaldson and Arlene Foster, walking out of negotiations, Trimble signed the Agreement. Trimble's wife, Daphne, spoke about the day the GFA was signed:

"There were no celebrations in our house. We just felt relief [...] The next day David went to get money out of the hole-in-the-wall and he'd forgotten his PIN number - that was the sort of pressure he was under."

Michael Longley (b.1939)

"In '94, there were rumours [of] an IRA ceasefire. I was reading the Iliad, which is the greatest poem about war and death and suffering.

And there's this wonderful passage in it where the old king of Troy, Priam, goes to the tent, plucks up courage, to the tent of Achilles to beg for the body of Hector, his son, whom Achilles has killed.

I thought [...] if I could compress this quite long episode into something like a sonnet and make my own contribution to the peace process.

And this poem ['Ceasefire'] emerged."

- Michael Longley

Click on the picture below to hear the Tánaiste's message on 25 years of the GFA



"I get down on my knees and do what must be done as

And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son"

The couplet of ['Ceasefire' \(1994\)](#)

Podcasts

["The women who were crucial to the Good Friday Agreement"](#)

Your Politics [RTÉ News] (31 mins)

["How the Good Friday Agreement helped bring peace to Northern Ireland"](#)

The Documentary Podcast [The BBC] (17 mins)

["As I Remember It: Bertie Ahern & The Good Friday Agreement"](#)

NewsTalk (9 episode series)

["Year '98: The Making of the Good Friday Agreement"](#)

BBC Radio Ulster (4 x 20 mins episodes)