

Press release: Secretary of State reaffirms commitment of UK Government to Belfast Agreement

Speaking after her bilateral meeting this afternoon with An Tánaiste, Simon Coveney TD, the Secretary of State reaffirmed the commitment of the United Kingdom Government to the 1998 Agreement.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP said:

The Agreement reached on 10 April 1998 offered the prospect of a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland; between Northern Ireland and Ireland; and throughout these islands.

On this, the 20th anniversary of that historic Belfast Agreement, the United Kingdom Government welcomes the peace and stability that has been achieved in Northern Ireland. The bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland has never been stronger.

The 1998 Agreement and its successors have been the bedrock of political progress in Northern Ireland over the past two decades. The UK Government remains committed to working together with the Irish Government, in full accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach to Northern Ireland affairs, to ensure that the Agreement is fully protected and implemented.

This means upholding the core principles that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of people who live there; inclusive devolved government; North-South co-operation and the strongest bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland; and the protection of people's rights, culture and identity.

The current political impasse in Northern Ireland and the absence of a fully functioning devolved Executive and Assembly is deeply regrettable. The UK and Irish Governments remain fully committed to the restoration of devolved government at the earliest possible opportunity and will do whatever we can, in accordance with the three-stranded approach, to achieving that.

A huge amount has been achieved in Northern Ireland over the past twenty years: politically, socially, economically, and of course in respect of the security situation. There is, however, still much work to be done. Today, we take inspiration from those who took enormous risks, on all sides, to reach an accommodation twenty years ago.

The UK Government reaffirms its commitment to building a shared society in Northern Ireland that works for everyone. We also remember those who were killed or injured during the Troubles. We also recall the sacrifice of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Armed Forces in upholding democracy and the rule of law. We will never forget the debt that we owe them.

The UK Government continues to believe that the best way we can honour them, as well as discharge our obligations to this and future generations, is through the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement, along with its successors, to achieve a stronger, more prosperous and united Northern Ireland. We want to build a Northern Ireland that is fit for the future.