

# Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation calls for urgent amendments to the Internal Market Bill

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The UK Government's introduction of the Internal Market Bill has severely undermined trust in its ability to abide by international agreements, and therefore to its commitments under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, of which it is a co-guarantor.

The damage the introduction of this Bill has done to trust in the Government has jeopardised relations within and across these islands, and has significantly increased the risk that its current negotiations with the European Union will not lead to a successful conclusion.

By introducing such a Bill, the Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation has lost confidence the Government will faithfully implement the Protocol and play its full part in maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation. In its current form the Bill also infringes on the powers of the devolved administrations.

The Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation therefore calls, in the first instance, on the UK Government to urgently introduce amendments to withdraw provisions in the Internal Market Bill it has already acknowledged will contravene international law by departing from the Withdrawal Agreement and its Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

If the UK Government is unwilling to introduce such amendments to its Bill, we call on Parliament to do so, and if such amendments are rejected we urge Parliament to vote down the Bill.

Resolution on issues relating to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland are contained within the Withdrawal Agreement and the Protocol itself, and were agreed by the UK Government. Achieving the minimum disruption to the movement of goods between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom must only be sought through the agreed mechanisms, and by seeking to reach a successful conclusion to the current negotiations on the future relations between the UK and the EU. Minimum disruption to the East-West movement of goods will not be achieved by contravening international law. To secure internal trade within the UK by deliberately acting in an illegal manner will leave us all immeasurably poorer, and as an Ad-Hoc Group supported by a range of organisations that value the totality of relations encompassed by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, we are against any action that looks to safeguard one set of relations by undermining the rule of law and damaging other sets of relations. That is why either Government or Parliament must introduce and pass the necessary amendments to withdraw provisions in the Internal Market Bill that will contravene international law.

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