



Statement by the Director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies on the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and formation of an Executive

31 January 2024

The Centre welcomes the restoration of the institutions under Strand 1 of the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. Without a Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, there is a void in the framework of relations within and between these islands that the 1998 Agreement and subsequent implementing agreements represent. The absence of these institutions has meant they have not addressed the mounting challenges facing communities and businesses in Northern Ireland, or those that face communities and businesses across this island and these islands and where solutions require cooperation. Their restoration must mean that those who inhabit them return with a renewed sense of commitment to making the institutions work for the benefit of all, and that we can see that commitment put into practice.

Crucially, that commitment and its putting into practice must be to all of the institutions established by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. We need to see the Northern Ireland Executive playing a full and positive role in the North South Ministerial Council and the British Irish Council, ensuring that all of the potential these institutions represent is exploited for the mutual benefit of all across these islands.

We will be considering the implications of the UK Command Paper – [Safeguarding the Union](#) – published today, hopeful that the UK Government, as one of its co-guarantors, is setting out measures that will fully protect all of the relations encompassed by the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, as well as the improved relations with the European Union.

At this time of hope, the Centre reaffirms its ongoing commitment to work to support and strengthen cooperation and relations within and across these islands, and we look forward to the restoration of a fully functioning Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly.