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News story

David Davis' closing remarks at the end of the third round of EU exit negotiations in Brussels

From: Department for Exiting the European Union (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-exiting-the-european-union>) and The Rt Hon David Davis MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/david-davis>)

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The statement follows the third round of negotiations for a new partnership with the EU.



Thank you Michel.

And can I start by adding my compliments to both teams, to yours. They've both worked incredibly hard this week. It's been as ever with an important negotiation quite a high-stress week, in terms of their work. So they deserve our compliments and our thanks.

This week we have had long and detailed discussions across multiple areas and I think it is fair to say, that we have seen some concrete progress. I mean, Michel referred to one, but I think there's been more than that.

However, as I said at the very start of this week, it is only through flexibility and imagination that we'll achieve a deal that truly works for both sides.

In some areas we have found this from the Commission's side, which I welcome, but there remains some way to go.

Talks this week have once again focussed on citizens' rights, on financial matters, on Northern Ireland and Ireland, and on issues relating to our separation. I'm pleased to say we have engaged in detail on all of those areas.

Now, when I met Michel here on Monday to open this third round of negotiations I set out the need for us to drive forward the technical discussions.

I wanted us to establish the areas where we agree, and work through the areas where we disagree, to ensure that we make further progress on a whole range of issues.

I think we've delivered that.

The UK's approach has been informed by a series of detailed papers – on customs; on Northern Ireland; on goods; on civil judicial cooperation; on data; on enforcement and dispute resolution; and on technical matters regarding our separation, such as ongoing confidentiality obligations.

These papers represent the hard work and detailed thinking that has been going on behind the scenes across Whitehall over the past twelve months.

They offer pragmatic and innovative solutions to issues related to our withdrawal and the future deep and special partnership that we want with the European Union. They do not aim to dictate a single approach, but rather considered options for us to work on.

As I have said all along, issues around our withdrawal and our future relationship are inextricably linked.

Our approach of setting out positions on them both is designed to progress the current negotiations as swiftly as possible.

And I note on what Michel just said on that, and I'll come back to that in a moment.

And that approach is already bearing fruit.

But beyond the debates around process, and technicalities, at the heart of this process must be a desire to deliver the best outcome for the people and the businesses of the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Citizens Rights

The most obvious area for that is on citizens' rights which remain a top priority.

This week we have discussed a wide range of issues which will have a significant impact on people's lives. In particular, both sides have agreed:

To protect the rights of frontier workers.

To cover future social security contributions for those covered by the Withdrawal Agreement.

That we should at least protect existing healthcare rights and arrangements for EU27 citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU. The EHIC arrangements.

That is good news for example, for British pensioners in the EU: it means that they will continue to have their health care arrangements protected both where they live and – when they travel to another Member State – to be able to use an EHIC card.

On economic rights, we have secured the right of British citizens in the EU27 to set up and manage a business within their Member State of residence, and of course visa versa.

On mutual recognition of qualifications, we have made progress in protecting the recognition of qualifications for British citizens resident in the EU27 and EU27 citizens in the UK.

For every one of these, of course, in fact every single thing I've said, all of these are reciprocal, they work for Brits in the EU and the EU27 in the UK.

To that end, we will shortly be publishing a comparison of the UK-EU-positions.

And we have had further discussions on the governance of the citizens' rights agreement – and the wider withdrawal agreement. We have shown a willingness to discuss creative solutions in this area and now is the time for the Commission to match it.

Financial Settlement

On the financial settlement - the central point, I think, of Michel's comments - the Commission has set out its position and we have a duty to our taxpayers to interrogate it rigorously.

At this round we presented our legal analyses. On on-budget issues, on off-budget issues and on the EIB (the European Investment Bank).

It is fair to say, across the piece, we have a very different legal stance. But as we said in the Article 50 letter, the settlement should be in accordance with law and in the spirit of the UK's continuing partnership with the EU, and I repeat the phrase, in accordance with the law and the spirit of the UK's continuing partnership with the EU.

Michel and I agreed in the last round, it is clear we won't be making incremental progress on the final shape of a deal on this in every round, and I think this round demonstrates that.

I think we have succeeded in building mutual understanding, but it is also clear that there are still significant differences to be bridged.

Ireland

On Ireland and Northern Ireland, Michel gave credit to this, our coordinators have met again to build on discussions in July.

We had a good discussion on maintaining the Common Travel Area and on safeguarding the Good Friday Agreement, on the basis of the UK paper.

We think there is a high degree of convergence on these key issues, and we agreed to work up shared principles on the Common Travel Area.

We also agreed to carry out further joint technical work on cross-border co-operation under the Good Friday Agreement.

Separation Issues

On Separation Issues, we have had good discussions on the detail of papers the UK published ahead of the round.

We have reached almost complete agreement on our approach to post-exit privileges and immunities which benefits both the UK and EU to maintain after we leave, and on our mutual approach to confidentiality requirements on shared information post-exit.

On Euratom and other institutional issues we have built upon discussions in July and are well placed to make even more progress in the next round.

We remain committed to making as much progress as possible on those issues that are solely related to our withdrawal, but our discussions this week have exposed yet again that the UK's approach is substantially more flexible and pragmatic than that of the EU as it avoids unnecessary disruption for businesses and consumers.

We have proposed pragmatic solutions to prevent this disruption and we urge the EU to be more imaginative and flexible in their approach to withdrawal on this point.

However, I remain of the view that on this as with many areas there is an unavoidable overlap between withdrawal and the future and they cannot be neatly compartmentalised.

Conclusion

To conclude the third round of talks have been productive and are an important stepping stone and key building block for discussions to come.

We are peeling away the layers, one by one, working through many issues at speed, and moving towards the core of these important matters.

We have locked in points of agreement and unpicked areas of divergence.

Being dynamic is integral to driving forward these talks at pace and to providing the best outcomes for people and businesses – not just in the UK, but in the EU as well.

Michel referred to the issue of time, the 29th of March 2019 midnight. I've said from the beginning of this process, some parts will be turbulent, hard, difficult, and of course, we will see that because there are differences of view that have to be resolved.

But both sides, and this was very apparent this week, both teams aim to be constructive, aim to get an outcome which is to the benefit both of the European Union and of the United Kingdom. That's the aim of both teams.

So my message to Michel and his team as we turn our heads to the next round of talks is: Let's continue to work together constructively to put people above process.

As discussions in June, July and again this week have shown – our separation from the European Union and our future relationship is inextricably linked. We can only resolve some of these issues with an eye on how the new partnership between us will work in the future.

This is not about skipping ahead or trying to reopen previous discussions, it is about pragmatically driving the progress we all want to see.

To that end my team will publish further papers in the coming weeks - continuing to set out our ambition for these negotiations, and the new deep and special partnership the UK wants to build with the EU.

I look forward to the next round of talks.

Thank you.

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