

[Press release: PM meeting with First Minister Sturgeon: 15 October 2018](#)



A Downing Street spokesperson said:

This afternoon, the Prime Minister Theresa May met with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon to discuss the final stage of negotiations with the European Union.

The Prime Minister spoke about the real progress that has been made in recent weeks on both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration on the future relationship. She also gave an update on the issues that still need to be resolved in relation to Northern Ireland and the backstop.

The Prime Minister emphasised that she believes that a negotiated deal is the best outcome for both the UK and for the European Union and that this deal is still achievable.

Published 15 October 2018

[Press release: First UK-Ghana Business Council seeks to boost trade and investment](#)

Foreign Office and DFID Minister Harriett Baldwin returned to Ghana to launch

the UK-Ghana Business Council, which met for the first time in Accra on 14 October 2018. The Business Council, which will meet twice a year, brings both governments together to find ways to reduce barriers to trade and investment and create jobs.

Minister Baldwin said:

Ghana increasingly offers attractive investment opportunities for UK businesses, which in turn helps create jobs and advance economic development locally. Our governments are doing everything that we can to help make it easier for entrepreneurial businesses to trade and grow.

The Minister co-chaired the Council with Vice-President Mahamudu Bawumia. The next Business Council will be held in London in December 2018.

The Business Council introduces a two-day UK-Ghana investment summit which will see a delegation of UK businesses travelling to Ghana to discuss investment opportunities in sectors such as infrastructure, industry, and manufacturing with Ghanaian businesses. The Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ghana Adam Afriyie and Trade and Export Promotion Minister Fairhead will also visit Ghana for the summit.

These discussions signal a strengthened economic development partnership between the two countries, and are expected to lead to investment that will create jobs for both UK and Ghanaian businesses, and boost local economies.

Ghanaian President Akufo-Addo, who will speak at the investment summit, has set out an ambitious vision to move Ghana beyond aid and transform the economy through industrialisation and infrastructure development creating thousands of jobs.

During her visit, Minister Baldwin met His Majesty Nana Amoatia Ofori Payin, King of Akyem, and discussed trade and development priorities. She also visited Tema Port with Border Force, who work with the local authorities to improve their monitoring and interdiction of smuggled goods at border points, cracking down on smuggling gangs.

Minister Baldwin last visited Ghana in August, immediately before joining the Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria and Kenya. The Prime Minister travelled with a delegation of British businesses, with a focus on strengthening trade ties across the continent, where the UK is already the second largest investor.

Further information

News story: Team UK heads to Sydney for the Invictus Games 2018

A team of 72 wounded, injured and sick current and former military personnel have departed from London Heathrow for Sydney, Australia to represent the UK in the fourth Invictus Games.

Competitors from 18 nations will compete in 11 medal sports with events being staged across Sydney, including at Sydney Olympic Park and in Sydney Harbour. The event will begin with an opening ceremony on 20 October at the Sydney Opera House.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I wish all of our UK competitors the best of luck in Australia. The word 'invictus' means unconquered and perfectly embodies the fighting spirit of our armed forces and ex-service personnel. Meeting many Invictus competitors this year, I learned how sport is spurring on recovery. Our armed forces have a world-class attitude and I am sure they will make their mark.

Jayne Kavanagh, the UK Team's Chef de Mission from the charity Help for Heroes, said:

Team UK have been working extremely hard for this moment and are ready to do the nation proud in Sydney. Achieving their goals with the British public behind them provides an incredible springboard for the recovery journeys that will continue long after the Games have ended. We are very grateful to our partners and sponsors who have helped make this opportunity possible.

Captain of the UK Invictus Games team, Mark 'Dot' Perkins, said:

Today is the culmination of months of careful preparation by all 72 competitors and the many staff, friends and family who have supported us. The next two weeks will demonstrate the unique power of sport to support recovery. Team UK are ready, raring to go and enjoying the camaraderie which the armed forces are famous for.

The Invictus Games is an international multi-sport event for wounded, injured and sick current and former military personnel. Getting involved in sport provides significant physical and mental health benefits including increased self-confidence.

More than 60% of this year's British competitors are new to the Invictus Games. More hopefuls than ever before trialled for a place on the team this year, with 72 competitors being selected from 451 potential competitors.

Team members were chosen for their performance, their commitment to training and the benefit to their recovery competing will provide.

The competitors will be joined in Sydney by hundreds of friends and family members who will make the journey to show their support.

Team UK has been delivered through a partnership of the Ministry of Defence, The Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. The [Invictus Games Sydney 2018](#) will take place from 20-27 October.

Statement to Parliament: PM statement on Brexit: 15 October 2018

With permission Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House ahead of this week's European Council.

We are entering the final stages of these negotiations.

This is the time for cool, calm heads to prevail.

And it is the time for a clear-eyed focus on the few remaining but critical issues that are still to be agreed.

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union went to Brussels for further talks with Michel Barnier.

There has inevitably been a great deal of inaccurate speculation.

So, I want to set out clearly for the House, the facts as they stand.

First, we have made real progress in recent weeks on both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration on our future relationship.

And I want to pay tribute to both negotiating teams for the many, many hours of hard work that have got us to this point.

In March, we agreed legal text around the implementation period, citizens' rights and the financial settlement.

And we have now made good progress on text concerning the majority of the outstanding issues.

Taken together, the shape of a deal across the vast majority of the

withdrawal agreement – the terms of our exit – are now clear.

We also have broad agreement on the structure and scope of the framework for our future relationship, with progress on issues like security, transport and services.

And perhaps, most significantly, we have made progress on Northern Ireland – where, Mr Speaker, the EU have been working with us to respond to the very real concerns we had on their original proposals.

Mr Speaker, let me remind the House why this is so important.

Both the UK and the EU share a profound responsibility to ensure the preservation of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, protecting the hard won peace and stability in Northern Ireland and ensuring that life continues essentially as it does now.

We agree that our future economic partnership should provide for solutions to the unique circumstances in Northern Ireland in the long term.

And, while we are both committed to ensuring that this future relationship is in place by the end of the implementation period, we accept that there is a chance that there may be a gap between the two.

This is what creates the need for a backstop to ensure that, if such a temporary gap were ever to arise, there would be no hard-border between Northern Ireland and Ireland – or indeed anything that would threaten the integrity of our precious union.

So this backstop is intended to be an insurance policy for people of Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Previously, the European Union had proposed a backstop that would see Northern Ireland carved-off in the EU's customs union and parts of the single market, separated through a border in the Irish Sea from the UK's own internal market.

As I have said many times, I could never accept that, no matter how unlikely such a scenario may be.

Creating any form of customs border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK would mean a fundamental change in the day-to-day experience for businesses in Northern Ireland – with the potential to affect jobs and investment.

We published our proposals on customs in the backstop in June, and after Salzburg, I said we would bring forward our own further proposals – and that is what we have done in these negotiations.

And the European Union have responded positively by agreeing to explore a UK-wide customs solution to this backstop.

But Mr Speaker, two problems remain.

First, the EU says there is not time to work out the detail of this UK-wide solution in the next few weeks.

So even with the progress we have made, the EU still requires a “backstop to the backstop” – effectively an insurance policy for the insurance policy.

And they want this to be the Northern Ireland-only solution that they had previously proposed.

We have been clear that we cannot agree to anything that threatens the integrity of our United Kingdom.

And I am sure the whole House shares the government’s view on this.

Indeed, the House of Commons set out its view when agreeing unanimously part 6, section 55 of the Taxation (Cross-border Trade Act) on a single United Kingdom customs territory.

This states:

“It shall be unlawful for Her Majesty’s Government to enter into arrangements under which Northern Ireland forms part of a separate customs territory to Great Britain.”

So, Mr Speaker, this message is clear – not just from this government, but from this whole House.

Second, Mr Speaker, I need to be able to look the British people in the eye and say this backstop is a temporary solution.

People are rightly concerned that what is only meant to be temporary could become a permanent limbo – with no new relationship between the UK and the EU ever agreed.

I am clear we are not going to be trapped permanently in a single customs territory unable to do meaningful trade deals.

So it must be the case, first, that the backstop should not need to come into force.

Second, that if it does, it must be temporary.

And third – while I do not believe this will be the case – if the EU were not to co-operate on our future relationship, we must be able to ensure that we cannot be kept in this backstop arrangement indefinitely.

I would not expect this House to agree to a deal unless we have the reassurance that the UK, as a sovereign nation, has this say over our arrangements with the EU.

Mr Speaker, I do not believe the UK and the EU are far apart.

We both agree that Article 50 cannot provide the legal basis for a permanent relationship.

And we both agree this backstop must be temporary.

So we must now work together to give effect to that agreement.

Mr Speaker, so much of these negotiations are necessarily technical.

But the reason this all matters is because it affects the future of our country.

It affects jobs and livelihoods in every community. It is about what kind of country we are and about our faith in our democracy.

Of course, it is frustrating that almost all of the remaining points of disagreement are focused on how we manage a scenario which both sides hope should never come to pass – and which if it does, will only be temporary.

We cannot let this disagreement derail the prospects of a good deal and leave us with the no deal outcome that no-one wants.

I continue to believe that a negotiated deal is the best outcome for the UK and for the European Union.

I continue to believe that such a deal is achievable.

And that is the spirit in which I will continue to work with our European partners.

And I commend this Statement to the House.

[World news story: Guatemala joins the Americas to combat illegal wildlife trade](#)

Representatives of Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and the US attended the meeting. Minor García, Deputy Director of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) represented Guatemala.

Deputy Director Garcia and other countries' delegates were hosted by Thérèse Coffey, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. According to official statistics, illegal wildlife trade is worth more than £17 billion a year, and is directly linked to transnational organized crime structures.

Participating countries recognised that Illegal Wildlife Trade is a major issue in the Americas, and that it should be treated as a serious and

organised crime that affects the economy, security, indigenous communities and ecosystems in the region.

Representatives decided to work collaboratively to tackle the trafficking of flora and fauna, including poaching, on a regional and international scale. To affirm this intention, all delegations recognised the need for regional collaboration on this issue.

At the end of the meeting, delegations welcomed the announcement from Peru that it will hold a regional conference on IWT in Lima in 2019, building on the work undertaken at London 2018.

This special meeting took place in the margins of the global conference on illegal wildlife trade, which ended 12 October in London and was organized by the British Government. Politicians, entrepreneurs and civil society from around the world met to seek for medium and long term solutions to tackle this problem.