

Joint statement on behalf of President Juncker and Prime Minister May

President Juncker and Prime Minister May met today to take stock of their efforts to deliver the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU, in line with the process launched by them on 7 February.

Their discussions covered:

- which guarantees could be given with regard to the backstop that underlines once again its temporary nature and give the appropriate legal assurance to both sides. Both reconfirmed their commitment to avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland and to respect the integrity of the EU's internal market and of the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister acknowledged the EU's position and notably the letter sent by President Tusk and President Juncker on 14 January. She welcomed the continued engagement of Task Force 50 with her team;
- the role alternative arrangements could play in replacing the backstop in future, where they tasked the Commission's Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier and Secretary of State Stephen Barclay with considering the process the European Commission and the UK will follow; and
- whether additions or changes to the Political Declaration can be made that are consistent with the EU and UK Government positions and increase confidence in the focus and ambition of both sides in delivering the future partnership envisaged as soon as possible. The Commission's Chief Negotiator and the Secretary of State will follow up.

The two leaders agreed that talks had been constructive, and they urged their respective teams to continue to explore the options in a positive spirit. They will review progress again in the coming days, seized of the tight timescale and the historic significance of setting the EU and the UK on a path to a deep and unique future partnership.

President Juncker and Prime Minister May agreed to talk again before the end of the month.