

Lord Frost call with European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič: 3 March 2021

Press release

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This was their first meeting since Lord Frost took up the role as Minister co-chairing the Partnership Council and the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee with the EU.

He underlined, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had in his letter of 2 February, that progress still needed to be urgently made to address the direct and often disproportionate impact that aspects of the Protocol are having on the citizens of Northern Ireland, contrary to its intended purpose. He acknowledged the work of the Joint Committee over the last few weeks since the Commission's triggering of Article 16 of the Protocol on 29 January, but noted that these discussions had not yet resolved the current difficulties.

Lord Frost explained that the measures announced today, following official-level notification to the Commission earlier this week, were temporary technical steps, which largely continued measures already in place, to provide more time for businesses such as supermarkets and parcel operators to adapt to and implement the new requirements in the Protocol. He underlined that these were needed for operational reasons and were the minimum necessary steps to allow time for constructive discussions in the Joint Committee to continue without the prospect of disruption to the everyday life of people in Northern Ireland in the coming weeks.

He noted that such operational measures were well precedented in other international trade arrangements, and that they were entirely consistent with

our intention to discharge our obligations under the Protocol in good faith.
He and Vice President Šefčovič agreed that both parties would remain in close contact.

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