

News story: David Davis' opening statement from the Queen's Speech Debate 'Brexit and Foreign Affairs'

The negotiations over our exit from the European Union are fundamental to our future.

It is no exaggeration to say that they will shape everything we want to achieve as a country over the coming years and decades.

We are doing nothing less than refashioning Britain's place in the world.

Our success or failure will determine and shape all our futures so it's obviously a great responsibility but also a great opportunity.

It falls on all of us in this place – every one of us in this Parliament – to make a success of it.

If we work together, and we succeed, we can ensure a strong and growing economy which spreads prosperity and opportunity around our country, which underpins well-funded public services and gives a better future for us and our children.

I have always been clear that after Brexit, the United Kingdom will continue to be the outward looking and global nation it has always been.

Indeed, we should be more engaged with the world than ever before.

For I firmly believe that last year's vote to leave the EU was not a call for retrenchment, a call to look in on ourselves.

The UK has the means, the ambition and now the freedom to play a more positive role in the world.

That is demonstrated in our commitments on defence and international aid.

The UK is the only country in the world that meets both its NATO pledge to spend 2% of GDP on defence, and the UN target to spend 0.7% of our Gross National Income on development spending.

That ensures that we both defend our values, work to tackle poverty and conflict and help to protect the most vulnerable in our world.

After exiting the European Union, Britain will be a country that still steps up to its role as a world leader.

That means continuing to help to protect and secure our wider European continent.

We want to deepen cooperation with other European states and bring the European Union policy into a wider, global framework.

Seeking a new deep and special partnership with the EU

As we have said, we will seek a deep and special partnership with the European Union. One that reflects our shared values and histories.

One that works for all parts of the United Kingdom, our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. And one that delivers for the special circumstances around the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, because no-one wants to see a return to a hard border.

It should be a partnership like no other.

It should be underpinned by ambitious agreements on free trade and customs, covering goods and services and seeking the greatest possible tariff and barrier-free trade.

It should also include a broad security agreement covering all aspects of our current collaboration – including defence and foreign policy, justice and home affairs, law enforcement and counter-terrorism.

And it should be supported by continued cooperation and open access in highly regulated areas like aviation, financial services, data, transport and nuclear.

We recognise that such a wide ranging partnership will require fair and uniform implementation. It must also be long lasting.

That is why we must ensure mechanisms exist to manage the evolution of our regulatory frameworks to maintain a fair and open trading environment and minimise non-tariff barriers.

That is also why we have been clear that this new partnership must be overseen by a new independent, impartial dispute resolution mechanism.

This cannot and will not be the European Court of Justice. No nation outside the European Union submits to direct jurisdiction of the ECJ – neither will the UK.

We will start towards this new partnership by securing the rights of citizens on both sides.

I know everyone in this House will agree with me that European Union citizens make a huge contribution to our society.

You've heard from the Prime Minister about what the approach will entail – but the overarching principle is that European citizens living in the United Kingdom will continue to live their lives in exactly the same way as British citizens, with the same rights and responsibilities.

We intend to reach agreement on this issue as quickly as possible.

But not everything in these negotiations will be easy. They will be complex and, I have no doubt, at times even confrontational.

But I am convinced that both sides want to secure close cooperation and a deep, new partnership.

Leaving the single market and customs union

Last year in the referendum we received a national instruction.

One which we will undertake in a way that serves the national interest.

The instruction from the British people was to take back control of our borders, our money and our laws.

So failing to deliver on this instruction is not an option for those of us that count ourselves as democrats.

Ending the free movement of people means leaving the single market – as the EU has made abundantly clear to those that have cared to listen.

We all accept the need to protect existing UK business in the EU. Leaving the single market does not mean losing access to that market. Which is why we're proposing a new ambitious free trade agreement.

But this is not just about protecting existing markets.

To deliver in the national interest we must seize on our new freedoms in terms of trade to create jobs and lift living standards. Britain must get out into the world, forge its own path, and be a true beacon for free trade.

That means leaving the customs union, so that Britain for the first time in over 40 years will be able to take full advantage of growing markets across the world and determine a trade policy fashioned – not around 28 country's interests – but about one country's interest. So we get a trade policy that suits this country, and this country alone.

The European Commission itself says that 90% of future growth in world trade will come from outside the European Union.

This has already been reflected by the long term decline in the share of British goods that go to the European Union as our global trade has increased dramatically.

That 90% growth outside has meant that our relative share of trade has gone down.

In services for example, we're now 60% outside the EU and 40% inside. Now, all of this is without preferential trade agreements for much of our trade.

Just so the House understands, the best academic data I can find shows that creating a new trade agreement increases the amount of trade by about 28%.

If the House wants an individual parable, NAFTA, in its first seven years of

operation, increased trade by 40%. So these are really significant items of policy which we can exercise.

So if this House wants a Brexit deal that drives prosperity and living standards.

If it really wants a Brexit for jobs. Then it must put its faith in free trade and ensure an exit that means we can embrace its opportunities to the full.

Let us move beyond the platitudinous propaganda of "hard and soft Brexit". Let us discuss how we fashion our new place in the world. And start acting together, truly in the national interest.

Repeal Bill

There is an extensive legislative agenda which is necessary to prepare the UK for its new place in the world.

Working together, in the national interest, will be crucial as we go through the process in this House – and the other place – of putting necessary legislation in position to make sure our laws work effectively on the day we leave the European Union.

For my part, I am willing to work with anyone to this end.

The sheer importance of this issue makes that essential.

The eyes of the country will be on us all. We will all be judged on our willingness to work pragmatically and effectively together to deliver the verdict of the people in last year's referendum.

Nothing is more central to this than the Repeal Bill.

The principle is straightforward: to repeal the 1972 Act, and to transfer existing European Union law into UK law. And, to answer a question which my opposite number has raised, these rights and freedoms will be brought into UK law without qualification, without limitation and without any sunset clauses. Any material changes will be dealt with by subsequent primary legislation.

I cannot stress enough to the House, and the nation, the importance of this Bill in ensuring that we can have a smooth and orderly exit from the European Union.

Every part of the United Kingdom needs to prepare its statute book and ensure that it functions after we leave the European Union. The Repeal Bill will give the Devolved Administrations the power to do just that and ensure a smooth and orderly exit for all.

As we have also said repeatedly, we expect there will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each Devolved Administration once we exit the EU.

That is why – given that this Bill affects the powers of the devolved institutions and legislates in devolved areas – we will seek the consent of the devolved legislatures for the Bill. We would like everyone to come together in support of this legislation, which is crucial to delivering the outcome of the referendum.

When we designed our approach to the Repeal Bill we endeavoured to strike the right balance between getting our statute book in order for the day we exit but also ensuring full parliamentary involvement and scrutiny.

Indeed, it is the only viable plan that has been put forward in this House. While I have heard some concerns raised by those on the opposite benches, I have heard no alternatives put forward nor any detailed proposals for how they would approach this crucial matter.

As I said to my opposite number when I presented our white paper on the Repeal Bill: “If, in the next two years, we find something that we have missed, we will put it right.”

That offer still stands, and not just to the opposition but to the entire House.

We must get this right.

We must be able to deliver a functioning UK statute book by the day we exit the European Union.

When the Lords Constitution Committee examined this issue, they found few alternatives. Their recommended approach aligns closely with that which we have set out.

It is vital for businesses, workers and consumers across the United Kingdom that this House undertakes the difficult but eminently achievable task of working together, responsibly in the national interest, to provide certainty and stability.

Other EU exit related legislation

While the Repeal Bill is the centrepiece of our approach, it is far from the only piece of exit related legislation we will be putting through.

The Government is bringing forward a first tranche of Bills on areas affected by our exit from the European Union. These include legislation on trade, customs, immigration, international sanctions, nuclear safeguards, agriculture, and fisheries.

I have told this House a number of times, we are not going to make significant policy changes without first passing primary legislation that will be thoroughly debated and voted on in both Houses. These Bills will deliver on that promise.

This initial tranche of Bills also has a further purpose. As I am sure many across the House would agree, it is the job of a responsible government to

prepare for all eventualities.

I have made clear yet again today that we want a close new partnership with the EU that works for everyone. However, we must also be ensure we have a functioning statute book and functioning national systems no matter what – in other words for all outcomes. These bills will help to provide that. Not doing so would, as the then Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee put it, would be a ‘dereliction of duty’.

We must and will be prepared for any outcome. However, I remain confident that we can get the right deal from these negotiations.

Doing so is fundamentally in the interests of both the UK and the EU.

A strong and prosperous EU, capable of projecting its values and continuing to play a leading role in the world, is in the United Kingdom’s best interests.

Just as a strong and prosperous UK is in the European Union’s interests.

Conclusion

The task ahead will no doubt be challenging.

But it was a task set to us by the British people in last year’s referendum – a national instruction.

So, it is our duty in this House to pull together and deliver on that instruction in the national interest.

For if we do, we can deliver a better and brighter future for the entire United Kingdom.

A future where we step onto the world stage, as a champion for free trade, a firm advocate of the rule of law and a true beacon for democracy.