

Press release: PM's European Council press statement: 20 October 2017

The United Kingdom will take its seat at the European Council table for another year and a half, and we have important work to achieve together in this time.

But cooperation with our European friends will not stop in March 2019.

The UK will stand alongside the EU, as a strong and committed partner, working to promote our shared interests and values.

Nowhere is this more important than in our approach to the global challenges we face.

Whether security and defence, migration or foreign policy issues – we face common opportunities and risks, and we must continue to address them together.

As I've said before, the UK is unconditionally committed to the security and defence of Europe. We share the vision of a strong, secure and successful EU, with global reach and influence. An EU capable of countering shared threats to our continent, working alongside a confident, outward-looking UK.

Yesterday we discussed a range of subjects including migration, the digital economy and some of the most pressing foreign policy issues, such as North Korea and Iran.

We stand united in our clear condemnation of North Korea's aggressive and illegal missile and nuclear tests and urge all states, including China, to play their part in changing the course Pyongyang is taking.

On Iran, we have reiterated our firm commitment to the nuclear deal, which we believe is vitally important for our shared security.

And last night at dinner, I spoke to my fellow leaders about my vision for a new, deep and special partnership between the UK and the European Union after Brexit.

A partnership based on the same set of fundamental beliefs – in not just democracy and rule of law, but also free trade, rigorous and fair competition, strong consumer rights, and high regulatory standards.

I am ambitious and positive for Britain's future and for these negotiations. But I know we still have some way to go.

Both sides have approached these talks with professionalism and a constructive spirit. We should recognise what has been achieved to date.

The UK and the EU share the same objective of safeguarding the rights of EU

nationals living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU.

EU citizens have made a huge contribution to our country and let me be clear that – whatever happens – we want them and their families to stay.

While there are a small number of issues that remain outstanding on citizens' rights, I am confident that we are in touching distance of a deal.

On Northern Ireland, we have agreed that the Belfast agreement must be at the heart of our approach and that Northern Ireland's unique circumstances demand specific solutions. It is vital that joint work on the peace process is not affected in any way – it is too important for that.

Both sides agree that there cannot be any physical infrastructure at the border and that the Common travel area must continue.

We have both committed to delivering a flexible and imaginative approach on this vital issue.

This Council is an important moment. It is a point at which to assess and reflect on how to make further progress.

My speech in Florence made two important steps, which have added a new impetus to the negotiations. I gave a firm commitment on the financial settlement and I proposed a time-limited implementation period based on current terms, which is in the interest of both the UK and the EU.

Both sides agree that subsequent rounds have been conducted in a new spirit. My fellow leaders have been discussing that this morning and I believe that it is in the interests of the UK that the EU 27 continues to take a united approach.

But if we are going to take a step forward together it must be on the basis of joint effort and endeavour.

We must work together to get to an outcome that we can stand behind and that works for all our people.