

Speech by President Juncker at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament on the state of play of negotiations with the United Kingdom

Buongiorno Presidente, Monsieur le Président,

Mesdames, Messieurs,

September was a month rich in speeches.

I started with my State of the Union address on the future of Europe in this very House where I laid out the Roadmap for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union.

This debate on building a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe continued at the Sorbonne in Paris. President Macron gave a very bold and a very European speech that I would like to congratulate and thank him for once again.

Prime Minister May's speech, on the other hand, was about separation. In Florence, she struck an optimistic tone on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the Union.

When it comes to Brexit, we still cannot talk about the future with any real clarity. This is because a condition of Article 50 and the mandate given to us by the leaders of the EU27 are very clear: we first need to agree on the terms of the divorce and then we see if we can half-lovingly find each other again.

The Prime Minister's speech in Florence was conciliatory. But speeches are not negotiating positions. And as Michel Barnier, the Commission's excellent Chief Negotiator, said last week: work still remains to be done.

We have not yet made the sufficient progress needed.

The negotiators made good progress on citizens' rights but the indispensable role of the European Court of Justice in guaranteeing those rights still needs to be agreed.

I am pleased that Prime Minister May and her team recognise that the UK has financial obligations which it must respect. The devil will be, as always, in the detail. But the taxpayers of the EU27 should not pay for the British decision.

And when it comes to Ireland, we can only talk of solutions that fully respect EU law and the Good Friday Agreement.

I will not go into any more detail here as negotiations continue next week and Michel will complete what I was just saying.

For those that think that the UK should just “go over Michel Barnier’s head”, I remind them that the Commission has been appointed by the 27 Member States and my choice of Michel Barnier had been welcomed by them. He acts on their behalf on the basis of clear negotiating mandates.

And he will report to them at the next European Council. Until now I cannot say that we are ready to enter the second phase of the negotiations.

Monsieur le Président,

Avec le départ du Royaume-Uni, une page de l’histoire européenne se tourne.

Et une autre est en train de s’écrire pour décider de l’avenir que nous voulons construire à 27.

Trop longtemps nous avons repoussé des questions cruciales à des lendemains incertains.

Trop longtemps nous avons préféré nous livrer à de longues discussions institutionnelles au lieu de débattre clairement avec les peuples d’Europe de la finalité de notre Union.

Tout cela doit changer. Et tout cela est en train de changer.

Les débats sur le futur de l’Europe se multiplient à travers l’Europe.

C’est bon signe. C’est bon signe parce qu’en le faisant nous démontrons santé et vigueur de la démocratie européenne. C’est ce que nous voulions en tant que Commission en lançant le Livre blanc sur l’avenir de l’Europe, nos différents documents de réflexion et les nombreux Dialogues Citoyens qui se sont multipliés dans tous les coins du continent.

Mais il ne faut pas s’éparpiller. C’est pourquoi j’ai voulu placer la poursuite de ces débats publics dans le contexte d’une feuille de route structurée, avec des échéances précises sur des propositions concrètes.

Cette route nous mènera jusqu’au 30 mars 2019 au Sommet spécial de Sibiu, Hermannstadt, en Roumanie où nous donnerons notre vision d’avenir pour l’Europe et où nous déciderons de ce que nous serons prêts à défendre et à construire ensemble à 27.

Notre avenir ce n’est pas le Brexit, c’est l’Europe.