

Speech: PM statement on Brexit: 2

April 2019

I have just come from chairing seven hours of Cabinet meetings focused on finding a route out of the current impasse – one that will deliver the Brexit the British people voted for, and allow us to move on and begin bringing our divided country back together.

I know there are some who are so fed up with delay and endless arguments that they would like to leave with No Deal next week.

I have always been clear that we could make a success of No Deal in the long-term.

But leaving with a deal is the best solution.

So we will need a further extension of Article 50 – one that is as short as possible and which ends when we pass a deal.

And we need to be clear what such an extension is for – to ensure we leave in a timely and orderly way.

This debate, this division, cannot drag on much longer.

It is putting Members of Parliament and everyone else under immense pressure – and it is doing damage to our politics.

Despite the best efforts of MPs, the process that the House of Commons has tried to lead has not come up with an answer.

So today I am taking action to break the logjam: I am offering to sit down with the Leader of the Opposition and to try to agree a plan – that we would both stick to – to ensure that we leave the European Union and that we do so with a deal.

Any plan would have to agree the current Withdrawal Agreement – it has already been negotiated with the 27 other members, and the EU has repeatedly said that it cannot and will not be reopened.

What we need to focus on is our Future Relationship with the EU.

The ideal outcome of this process would be to agree an approach on a Future Relationship that delivers on the result of the Referendum, that both the Leader of the Opposition and I could put to the House for approval, and which I could then take to next week's European Council.

However, if we cannot agree on a single unified approach, then we would instead agree a number of options for the Future Relationship that we could put to the House in a series of votes to determine which course to pursue.

Crucially, the Government stands ready to abide by the decision of the House.

But to make this process work, the Opposition would need to agree to this too.

The Government would then bring forward the Withdrawal Agreement Bill. We would want to agree a timetable for this Bill to ensure it is passed before 22nd May so that the United Kingdom need not take part in European Parliamentary Elections.

This is a difficult time for everyone.

Passions are running high on all sides of the argument.

But we can and must find the compromises that will deliver what the British people voted for.

This is a decisive moment in the story of these islands.

And it requires national unity to deliver the national interest.