

UK/EU talks

I held a conference in Westminster yesterday on the EU talks.

I was able to praise the government for its opening approach. They are right to insist on talking about all issues in a series of simultaneous working groups. They are right to say we want a Free Trade Agreement, not a comprehensive Partnership Agreement or Association Agreement designed for countries seeking to converge and join the EU. They are right to stress there is no read across from say fishing to free trade. Each has to be settled on its own merits.

The EU still seems to think the UK is the weak party to the talks and needs to make more concessions. It also seems to think the UK will be so desperate for a deal it will crack and concede on fishing, convergence of laws, powers of the ECJ and all the rest of their federal agenda.

The Conference provided unified advice. We do not need to pay to trade. An FTA is very much in the EU's interest. We need to take control of our fish and land many more of them at home. We want to free ourselves of the controls of the ECJ, and will establish the right to shape our own laws as we see fit. Canada and Japan have FTAs with the EU but do not accept EU laws and the ultimate power of the ECJ. Our defence arrangements should be under our control, and our main collaboration through NATO. We should not impose any border between Northern Ireland and GB and not accept any continuing EU jurisdiction over any part of the UK from January 1. 2021.