

# A draft letter for Mr Donald Tusk to Angela Merkel

Brussels

April 1st 2017

Dear Angela

I have been holding your line that the UK cannot expect to discuss anything about the future relationship with the EU until they have agreed and settled a large bill for exit. I understand fully Germany's reluctance to put more money in to the next seven year budget framework just because the UK has left and is no longer helping pay the bills, but I cannot accept your view that is all the EU's fault. The member states also played their role in developing policies and attitudes which clearly upset too many people in the UK. The European tradition of showing respect for government, and voting again if a referendum miscarries, is not unfortunately practised in the UK where apparently they accept the result.

I have to say I don't think the current line is going to work. The UK is emboldened by what has happened so far, and they seem to be losing their fear of the consequences as a result. We saw how Project Fear warning them of bad economic consequences did not stop them voting against the EU, and the absence of such negative results so far has strengthened the hand of the Brexit side in the argument. We also need to be aware that there are now pro Brexit Ministers in the government, and advisers who are also of that persuasion. It will be very difficult for us all if at the first meeting we present the bill and the UK simply refuses to accept any liability. They apparently believe there is no legal basis in the Treaties to require them to pay other than their regular contributions up to the date of exit. I am struggling to find a counter to this case.

I am being lobbied by business and farmers from Germany and elsewhere that they want us to keep tariff free trade for cars and to avoid high WTO tariffs on agricultural products, two areas where the EU has a large balance of trade surplus with the UK. I am also being told by other governments that they don't want to anger the UK, and do not wish to lose the valuable intelligence, military co-operation, scientific collaboration and various joint investments and activities. May I suggest we do not have a prolonged wrangle over talks about talks, as this could also fuel Eurosceptic and other hostile opinions in France, Italy and elsewhere where we face elections soon. May I also respectfully suggest that you do not speak out before consulting other states, as there is some private resentment of this.

Perhaps we could get together soon to see what we can salvage from this tricky situation. There is a case for cutting our losses with the UK quickly before it splits the EU and diverts us from our most important task of creating greater unity amongst the remaining 27.

Yours

etc

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## [Guangdong probes alleged white dolphin butchering](#)



Three photos posted by an internet user show that a Chinese white dolphin was killed, dismembered by two middle-aged men and then sold to customers in Nanshui Town, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province on March 30, 2017. [Photo/Weibo.com]

Investigations are underway after netizens reported the butchering of an aquatic animal alleged to be a baby Chinese white dolphin in Zhuhai, said Guangdong Ocean and Fishery Administration on Friday.

At 6:30 pm on Thursday, netizens reported that some people were butchering a dolphin near Nanshui in Zhuhai's Jinwan District.

After receiving the tip-off, law enforcement officers immediately headed to the spot.

They recovered and sealed the remains of the aquatic animal, which will be checked and verified by technical authorities, it was added.

A preliminary investigation by the local fishing bureau said a fisherman surnamed Zhong found a big fish floating in the sea near Gaolan Port. He saw the fish had been dead and dragged it to the wharf and let three other men butcher it.

The three suspects are currently cooperating with police investigations, the administration said.

The Chinese white dolphin, nicknamed "mermaid" and "giant panda of the sea", is mainly found in the western Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. In China, it often appears in the East China Sea, and is guarded under first-class state protection.

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## [State Council appoints Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor HKSAR chief executive](#)



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (C) presides over the 7th plenary meeting of the State Council in Beijing, capital of China, March 31, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

The State Council decided at a meeting Friday to appoint Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor as the fifth-term chief executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Lam will assume office on July 1, 2017.

Premier Li Keqiang presided over the meeting and signed a State Council decree on the appointment.

Lam won the election to become the fifth-term chief executive of HKSAR on Sunday with 777 of 1,163 valid votes.

The election was conducted in line with the HKSAR Basic Law, relevant decisions of the National People's Congress Standing Committee and relevant laws of the HKSAR, Li said, adding that it "embodied the principle of openness, fair play and justice."

The result showed that Hong Kong society has extensive recognition, trust and expectations for Lam, according to the premier.

The central government will continue to fully and accurately implement the principle of "one country, two systems," "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong" with a high degree of autonomy, and will act strictly in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law to ensure that the principle of "one country, two systems" is steadfastly applied in Hong Kong without bending or distortion, Li said.

The premier vowed the central government's full support for the chief executive and the SAR government in their administering of Hong Kong in accordance with the law, developing the economy, improving the people's quality of life, advancing democracy and promoting harmony.

The central government will "take effective measures to deepen cooperation between the mainland and Hong Kong, promote the development of a city cluster in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, give play to Hong Kong's unique advantage, and raise Hong Kong's status and function in national economic development and opening up," Li said.

Li expressed his belief that Lam, after taking office, will unite and lead the HKSAR government and that people from all walks of life in Hong Kong will make pragmatic progress and forge ahead to maintain Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability and create a brighter future.

Vice premiers Zhang Gaoli, Liu Yandong and Ma Kai also attended Friday's meeting.

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