

Statement on further UK-EU negotiations: 21 October 2020

We have studied carefully the statement by Michel Barnier to the European Parliament this morning. As the EU's Chief Negotiator his words are authoritative.

The Prime Minister and Michael Gove have both made clear in recent days that a fundamental change in approach was needed from the EU from that shown in recent weeks.

They made clear that the EU had to be serious about talking intensively, on all issues, and bringing the negotiation to a conclusion. They were also clear that the EU had to accept once again that it was dealing with an independent and sovereign country and that any agreement would need to be consistent with that status.

We welcome the fact that Mr Barnier acknowledged both points this morning, and additionally that movement would be needed from both sides in the talks if agreement was to be reached. As he made clear, "any future agreement will be made in respect of the decision-making autonomy of the European Union and with respect for British sovereignty.

Lord Frost discussed the implications of this statement and the state of play with Mr Barnier earlier today. On the basis of that conversation we are ready to welcome the EU team to London to resume negotiations later this week. [We have jointly agreed a set of principles for handling this intensified phase of talks.](#)

As to the substance, we note that Mr Barnier set out the principles that the EU has brought to this negotiation, and that he also acknowledged the UK's established red lines. It is clear that significant gaps remain between our positions in the most difficult areas, but we are ready, with the EU, to see if it is possible to bridge them in intensive talks. For our part, we remain clear that the best and most established means of regulating the relationship between two sovereign and autonomous parties is one based on a free trade agreement.

As both sides have made clear, it takes two to reach an agreement. It is entirely possible that negotiations will not succeed. If so, the UK will end the transition period on Australia terms and will prosper in doing so.

It is essential now that UK businesses, hauliers, and travellers prepare actively for the end of the transition period, since change is coming, whether an agreement is reached or not.