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Intervention during the plenary debate on the state of play of negotiations with
the United Kingdom

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Michel Barnier said in his introductory remarks that fifteen days and one negotiation round separates us from an important meeting of the European Council that will debate and decide. That meeting will be a chance to take stock of the results so far and decide whether to expand negotiating mandate allowing for parallel discussions on the future agreement and the transition.

However, maintaining the new dynamics of negotiation process depends heavily on whether the U.K. prime minister speech in Florence will get translated into new negotiation positions and concrete proposals as soon as possible. Accelerated rhythm of meetings has to go hand in hand with progress on content.

On the content let me mention four points:

First, we need reassurance on how “direct effect” will work in practice.

Second, we need reassurance that bureaucratic burdens will be avoided.

Third, we need to avoid the risks of incoherence and distortions in interpretation of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Finally, we need to see the respect of the fact that the situation of Northern Ireland is unique and deserves to be treated in a unique way.

We all want to reach that deep, special partnership that Mrs May has called for and which is of interest for all European citizens.

But lack of progress now would delay the whole process of negotiations and put in danger the orderly exit. That is why reaching confidence and a shared understanding on the essential issues of the first phase is of such importance.

There is a chance that negotiations will be taken out of a standstill situation.