

Professor Danuta Hübner, PhD

Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament

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I would like to use this opportunity to thank Michel Barnier and his Team for excellent cooperation over the last months. I sincerely hope we will continue to carry on our works in that honest and constructive spirit. But, we as the European Parliament expect also a much closer cooperation with the Council and Member States as the scope of negotiations is moving.

Indeed, we are awaiting the legal text of the withdrawal agreement. But many separation-related issues, which also belong to the Withdrawal Agreement, still need to be negotiated. And for a number of them, the position of the UK remains unknown.

We insist that our British partners make those issues a priority in ongoing negotiations. This is my first point.

Secondly, we understand that for Michel Barnier the objective is to conclude timely the withdrawal agreement to which a political declaration on the future framework will be attached. But even for this chapter of the process, there are risks regarding timely conclusion.

We hear from the British side that in London the ratification by Parliament can happen in the last minute. There can also be a crisis in

the negotiations. While it is in nobody's interest, those risks can materialise.

That is why we must prepare for the worst possible scenario, which is no deal on 30 March 2019.

There is a clear need to create legal certainty for the no-deal situation. We know that work on this scenario is ongoing in the Commission. The European Parliament hopes for a constructive cooperation with the Commission and the Council regarding this preparedness, in particular on legislative adjustments.

Thirdly, the UK has already been very clear on what it does not want. Much less clear is what it does want. There are the ideas leaked here and there. Some are unacceptable or even in contradiction with the Treaties.

We hope to have the best, widest possible cooperation with the UK in the future but the internal market must not be torn into pieces to single out the parts that taste good.

In this context we call on all Member States and all European institutions to continue keeping their strong unity throughout the whole process.

Let me conclude by saying, that the interplay of all constitutional, legal and political issues at stake is significant.

We must ensure that the myriad of those issues does not compromise the safeguarding of the interest of the Union and, above all, of our citizens.

It is our duty as European Parliament to be vigilant and defend those interests at all stages, not only throughout the consent procedure. And we shall do so.