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Statement on Brexit after the rejection of Withdrawal Agreement

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The rejection of the withdrawal agreement means several crucial things.

First, that an orderly withdrawal in two weeks is not going to happen.

Second, that the Union's and indeed UK's priorities of protecting citizens and businesses most affected by the withdrawal, and of avoiding a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland and safeguarding the Good Friday Agreement, have not been delivered, a mere two weeks before March 29. They are indeed serious risks.

If the result of the possible vote tomorrow, is to request an extension: what for and for how long? A short technical extension would only make sense with a positive meaningful vote, which is not the case anymore. A longer extension would not only bring the legal and political problem in the context of European elections.

It will be a period when future partnership cannot be negotiated. The Withdrawal Agreement, will not be reopened. A longer extension means a longer period of uncertainty.

The Union has said many times that an orderly withdrawal on the basis of an agreement concluded under Article 50 of the Treaty. This is indeed a precondition for creating trust necessary for the negotiations of a deep and ambitious new relationship and we have to repeated today.