

Professor Danuta Hübner
“The UK government needs to accept responsibility for the Protocol”
Plenary session debate on “The UK government’s unilateral introduction of the
Northern Ireland Protocol Bill and respect for international law”
Strasbourg, 6 July 2022

Presidents,

Colleagues,

The Northern Ireland Protocol Bill is not “a trivial set of adjustments” as Prime Minister Johnson described it.

It is a near complete unilateral rewrite, through domestic law, of a binding international treaty, voluntarily entered by the UK government. This is a clear breach of international law.

The Bill would grant UK Ministers extraordinarily wide discretionary powers to implement their alternative to the Protocol without negotiating with the EU.

Some of the so-called fixes would actively undermine the unique status of Northern Ireland, depriving it of the best of both worlds.

We must remember that the Protocol provides access to the EU internal market for the goods coming from the Northern Ireland. The Bill brings major risk to this access.

The UK government needs to accept responsibility for the Protocol and return to the negotiating table as soon as possible. It is not too late to avoid new local election in the Northern Ireland and increased legal uncertainty.