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# Democratic Unionist Party Statement



08 December 2017

DUP Leader Arlene Foster MLA said,

## Arlene Foster MLA

Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and First Minister of Northern Ireland

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“Upon receipt of the draft text on Monday, the Democratic Unionist Party indicated to the Prime Minister that we could not support it as a basis for moving forward.

Since then we have intensely engaged with the Government right up until the early hours of this morning to secure changes to the document, mindful of the significant issues at stake for the future of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole. Throughout this process our guiding principle has been to act in the national interest to ensure the constitutional and economic integrity of the United Kingdom is not compromised as we leave the European Union. The Democratic Unionist Party has always been clear that the Union that matters most to Northern Ireland is that of the Union of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

As a consequence of the engagement between the Government and our team, substantial positive progress has been made on improving the text of Monday's original draft paper.

Contained within the new text we now have clear commitments that:

- Northern Ireland will leave the European Union along with the rest of the United Kingdom.
- Northern Ireland will leave the single market and the customs union along with the rest of the United Kingdom.
- There will be no customs or trade border down the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.
- Northern Ireland will not be separated constitutionally, politically, economically or regulatory from the rest of the United Kingdom and the joint UK-EU report at the conclusion of phase one makes clear that in all circumstances the United Kingdom will continue to ensure the same unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the whole of the UK internal market.
- There will be no so-called 'special status' for Northern Ireland as demanded by Sinn Fein.
- The report makes it clear that the UK remains committed to preserving the integrity of its internal market and Northern Ireland's place within it, as it leaves the EU's internal market and customs union.

However, we believe there is still more work to be done to improve the paper. Specifically, more work is needed around:

- the areas of cooperation where it would be necessary to have alignment of rules and standards,
- how any alignment could be effected without staying in the single market and customs union and
- what necessary alignment may be required to happen.

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We do however welcome the assurance given by the Prime Minister and Brexit Secretary in Parliament that any alignment will be done on a UK wide basis, ensuring that there would be no barriers to trade between Northern Ireland and our most important market in the rest of the UK.

The measures set out by the Government in August can ensure that there will be no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic when we leave the European Union. The evidence given to the Brexit Select Committee by the Permanent Secretary of HMRC has supported that position.

There is still a major debate within the Cabinet, Parliament, the Conservative Party and other parties about the nature of any regulatory alignment with the EU that may be required post Brexit. We believe that the paper could pre-judge the outcome of that debate.

We cautioned the Prime Minister about proceeding with this agreement in its present form given the issues which still need to be resolved and the views expressed to us by many of her own party colleagues. However, it was ultimately a matter for the Prime Minister to decide how she chose to proceed.

We will play a full part with the Government in the second stage of the negotiations on a comprehensive trade deal. Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed and how we vote on the final deal will depend on its contents.

Along with like-mind colleagues across the House of Commons, we will ensure that there is no backsliding on the promises made about the integrity of the Union. We will also work to ensure that the United Kingdom as a whole exits the European Union in a way that is of the greatest benefit to our prosperity and freedom.”

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