



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom
The Head of the Task Force

Brussels,
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Dear Mr Francois,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June. It is a pleasure to hear from UK elected representatives. Having been an elected representative for many years myself, I value the crucial role you play in scrutinising and holding your Government to account.

As I have been saying on numerous occasions, I have always been, and remain, interested in hearing the views of UK parliamentarians. In this spirit, I have over the past years met British politicians representing the entire spectrum of views on Brexit, including members of the European Research Group, which you chair.

While nobody has been able to demonstrate to me the added value of leaving the most integrated economic and free trade area in the world, I have always respected the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU. In this spirit, the EU negotiated the Withdrawal Agreement with your government. In this same spirit, we approach the ongoing negotiations with your great – and indeed free – country, which will remain a close neighbor, friend and ally of the European Union.

The outlines of such a comprehensive future partnership were negotiated with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and agreed between him and the EU27 in the Political Declaration in October 2019. The Political Declaration fully respects the UK's sovereignty, as it respects that of the EU and its Member States.

This Political Declaration, agreed by your Prime Minister and voted for by the House of Commons, including yourself, as part of the Withdrawal Agreement ratification, states the following on the role of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the future relationship:

*Rt Hon Mark Francois
Member of Parliament for Rayleigh & Wickford and
Chairman of the European Research Group
House of Commons
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“[S]hould a dispute raise a question of interpretation of provisions or concepts of Union law [...] the arbitration panel should refer the question to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) as the sole arbiter of Union law, for a binding ruling as regards the interpretation of Union law. Conversely, there should be no reference to the CJEU where a dispute does not raise such a question.”

This wording reflects the legal reality that the Court of Justice of the European Union must have the final word on the interpretation of EU law.

All we are asking of the UK is to honour its commitments in the Political Declaration.

You also refer to the level playing field. If the UK wants to conclude an economic partnership with the EU, fairness and the rules of the game in an unprecedented context of geographic proximity and close economic interconnectedness, based on almost five decades of sharing the same single market, are necessary. Let me also add that the EU will not agree to an economic partnership with the UK without a balanced fisheries agreement, setting out in particular quota shares and reciprocal access to waters.

Agreement on these crucial issues is a precondition for our future economic partnership, as is the full implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement. The two preconditions are also included in the Political Declaration signed by Prime Minister Johnson.

I fully share your desire for the United Kingdom and the European Union to conclude this future partnership and to do so quickly. This is why, with the United Kingdom’s Chief Negotiator David Frost, I have therefore agreed on an intensified schedule of meetings. A restricted round of negotiations took place between 29 June and 2 July and subsequent rounds are foreseen in July, August and September. However, let me underline that what matters more than the format of the talks is progress on substance and for the moment, results have been disappointing.

We will continue to work with determination to conclude the negotiations with success as we continue to believe that this can be done despite the short time available, which is the choice of your government.

Yours sincerely, *d. Arditi*



Michel BARNIER