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Minister Coveney on conclusion of second round of Brexit Negotiations

20/7/17

Minister Simon Coveney, Brexit, Press Releases, Europe, 2017

Speaking in London where he is holding a number of stakeholder engagements on Brexit, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for Brexit, Simon Coveney TD, commented on the conclusion today of the second round of the EU-UK negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU, stating:

"The second round of the Brexit negotiations started the substantial talks on the issues to be addressed in this first phase of the negotiations, including citizens' rights, the financial settlement and of course unique Irish issues. While some progress was made this week, it is clear that many difficult and complex issues remain. These must be dealt with urgently as the negotiations progress.

"On the Irish specific issues, I am satisfied with the direction of the discussions. As agreed in advance of the this week's talks, the negotiating teams focused on maintaining the Common Travel Area and protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts. The discussions centred on advancing common understanding on the two sets of issues, with both sides agreeing to do further work ahead of the next round of the talks in late August.

"In particular, more detailed work is needed on how best to protect North-South cooperation, an essential aspect of the Good Friday Agreement. It has facilitated some of the most tangible benefits from the peace process and contributed directly to the normalisation of daily life in the border region.

"On the Common Travel Area, I welcome that both sides agreed that it should be maintained. It will now be for the UK side to confirm how it will ensure this.

"The specific question of the border was not part of this week's round of negotiations, and was never intended to be. However, the focus this week on protecting the gains of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts is of course directly relevant to the crucial objective of avoiding a hard border.

"My officials and I will continue to work closely with Michel Barnier and his team to ensure that sufficient progress is made on the Irish specific issues in phase one of the negotiations. Progress on these, on citizens' rights and the financial settlement would allow parallel discussions to begin this autumn on the EU's future relationship with the EU. This will require constructive engagement on all issues and a strong political willingness to achieve the best possible withdrawal agreement. Contrary to what some may think, no agreement would be disastrous for everyone. We must continue to work for the closest possible future relationship between the EU and the UK, facilitated by effective transitional arrangements.

With my colleagues across Government I will continue to work to ensure that Ireland's priorities in these negotiations – minimising the impact on our trade and economy, protecting the peace process, maintaining the CTA and its associated rights and securing the future of the EU – are delivered."

Ends

Contact Details

[Email the Press Office](#)

Tel: +353 (0)1 408 2032

Tel: +353 (0)1 408 2268

Tel: +353 (0)1 408 2274

Tel: +353 (0)1 408 2276

Tel: +353 (0)1 408 2280

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