Coveney reaction 16 August

**Simon Coveney, Irish foreign affairs minister**

"Those principles, we agree with the vast majority of them.

"They are aspirational and they reflect a lot of the language that the Irish government has been using, in terms of maintaining the status quo, frictionless borders.

"What we want essentially is an invisible border, which is what we have at the moment."

He added that during Brexit negotiations the Government will be "realistic and fair, but also stubborn in relation to defending Irish interests".

Mr Coveney said: "I think this is a good test of the European Union in terms of protecting the interests of small countries as well as big ones.

"All of our interaction with the Barnier Task Force has reinforced the point that he (Michel Barnier) made when he said Ireland's interests is Europe's interests."

He added: "What is happening here is not by Irish design. The British people have decided to leave the EU.

"That has very significant consequences for us and it is my job to make sure I protect Irish interests in the context of negotiations to facilitate that exit.

"From that point of view we won't be picking fights for the sake of it but we will be firm and clear in terms of what we regard is important and essential for Ireland to be able to support a future deal."

Both the Taoiseach and I have been very clear on that. On the same page…

Referring to the border issue, Mr Coveney said that, while the position paper is a step forward, "significant questions" still remain.

Ireland will not be used as ‘**pawn**’ in EU-UK talks