Coveney RTE interview 28 July 2017 (following from quotes by Jeffrey Donaldson, DUP politician)

(Excerpts)

I don’t agree with him and I don’t agree that anything I’m saying is damaging British Irish relations

I regard myself as a friend of Britain

I regard the Irish-British relationship as special

friends should be honest with each other

When Enda Kenny was Taoiseach he made it clear that it was a political matter first and foremost not a legal or a technical matter in terms of the border issues

I maintain that position as does Leo Varadkar

There is an onus on Britain now to ensure that this does not impact in a harmful way on Ireland North and South

This is a political issue first and foremost

Unique political solutions

This is not purely a commercial issue the border issues on the island are part of a peace process that has been going on for decades

I cannot stand over any proposal that is effectively suggesting that we should go back to borders

Instead we should try and solve this issue politically, on an all-Ireland basis

There is an onus on the UK to come up with imaginative and unique solutions

Those solutions shouldn’t compromise the Good Friday Agreement and they shouldn’t compromise the principle of consent

Protective normality on the Island of Ireland

Which has been a contributor to the Peace Process

This requires a political solution in which the governments work out a unique political solution.

There is a formal negotiation that is ongoing at the moment between an EU negotiating team (and Ireland is a part of) and the UK

Of course there will

But let nobody pretend that this is an easy process

Ireland has real interests here real vulnerabilities that I HAVE A responsibility

We need to make it very clear from the very start of these negotiations that we cannot support any British proposals or EU proposals for that matter, that result in the re-emergence of a border on the island on Ireland and the consequences that flow from that

It is the position that Leo Varadkar holds and that Enda Kenny held

We cannot support any proposal that results in a hard border

We’ve been very consistent on that.

It’s because we’re now in the heart of negotiations and they’re very real that it’s becoming a real story but this is the Irish Government not changing it’s position

That’s why it’s going to become very difficult