

25 November 2018 - Seul le prononcé fait foi

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# Press conference given by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic

Brussels, 25 November 2018

So, we held an important summit just now which, as I said on arrival, is in my view a summit of unity, dignity and seriousness.

The aim was to approve the agreement on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union and the political framework for our future relationship. This is the agreement the 27 of us endorsed this morning.

I want to pay tribute here to the remarkable job done by Michel Barnier, all his teams and the European Commission and European Council teams. Thanks to European unity we've been able, as a result, to negotiate a good agreement which protects our interests and values and prepares for close cooperation with the United Kingdom.

I also want to pay tribute here to Theresa May, who, at every moment, whilst fervently defending her country's interest, has been able to seek paths to lasting cooperation with the European Union, which is our common good.

And I want to say that the United Kingdom will continue having its place, today and tomorrow, with the role it is prepared to take on and which may evolve, in the European concert of nations.

Even though we've passed an important stage today, we also need to prepare for what's next, firstly because the withdrawal agreement hasn't been ratified, and secondly because we still haven't defined all the details of the future relationship. And as far as this goes, we obviously want to protect our main interests.

It's why we've got a statement by the 27 which is clear and defines the parameters of the next stage, and I want to emphasize three important points here which France in particular was keen to get included.

First, to ensure conditions for fair competition: the future partnership will have to include stronger provisions, very clearly, to protect our businesses and be in genuine alignment over the long term.

Secondly, as regards fishing, on which we'll be concentrating our efforts to get an agreement safeguarding access to British waters before the end of the transition period, and on which obviously the interests of our fishermen and the whole industry will be defended.

Finally in terms of respect for the European Union's decision-making autonomy, which is an important point.

These three issues feature in today's declaration by the 27. And to prepare the future stages, I'd like us to adopt the same method, namely unity and a common defence of these principles.

Finally, I believe we must also be able to learn lessons today from this departure of a member state, a major partner, for the first time in the history of the European enterprise.

We must understand in this way that Europe is fragile, that it can't be taken for granted and that we must therefore defend it against all those who forget that it's a guarantee of peace, prosperity and security on our continent.

But, paradoxically, Brexit has also shown everyone the value of this Union, however much it can be improved. And in doing so we must understand that our Europe has to be overhauled in order to be better understood by our peoples and address their aspirations, because, very clearly, Brexit tells us that it hasn't been able to sufficiently reassure and protect the peoples of each of our countries.

It's this planned overhaul which, for me, must also be central to the coming months for our European Union.