

Statement by the Conference of Presidents and the Brexit Steering Group of the European Parliament in preparation of the European Council of 10 April 2019.

The European Parliament has always supported a close EU-UK future relationship.

The European Parliament believes that the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, affecting our citizens and our businesses, needs to end.

In this context, it would welcome a swift and positive outcome of the ongoing cross-party dialogue, and would support an upgrading of the political declaration, that could include participation in either the customs union or the single market, in full compliance with EU principles - indivisibility of the four freedoms, integrity of the single market and autonomy of EU decision-making.

We share the consideration that a no deal exit would be detrimental to the citizens and the economy and should be avoided.

We believe, therefore, that when Prime Minister May comes to the European Council today she cannot come empty handed. We expect the Prime Minister to indicate what are the prospects of the cross-party talks between the Government and the Labour Party and their anticipated results and whether a solid parliamentary majority in support of such an agreement exists. If not, she should indicate clearly the way forward (be it a referendum, a general election, or a revocation).

In this context, the European Council would be advised to provide the UK with an extension which should be appropriately framed to respect the principle of sincere cooperation and under no circumstance allow the Withdrawal Agreement to be reopened or negotiations on the future relations initiated.

Brexit should not distract the EU from addressing the challenges it faces. It is the obligation of the UK, in case of a longer extension, to participate in the EU elections. In these circumstances, while fully respecting the rights of all its Members, the Parliament will at all times preserve its integrity, efficiency and dignity.

We call on the European Council to act in this respect.