



## Brexit: No one is above the law, not even the UK government

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Statement by

The very serious statement issued yesterday (8 September) by the UK government on its decision to renege on the Withdrawal agreement is unacceptable. And this for three reasons:



1. In a rule-based community "*pacta sunt servanda*," the law must remain the basic principle of orderly coexistence among nations and the shared primacy of the law is the principle on which the intention to respect the path of negotiation and cooperation is founded, as enshrined in the UN

charter itself. It is even more unacceptable that such statements come from the very nation that is considered to be one of the birthplaces of our legal system and our democratic and liberal societies;

2. Linking the decision of non-application of the Withdrawal Agreement to the fact that we are not able to reach a trade deal between the United Kingdom and the European Union is complete nonsense as it intends to conceal the full British responsibility of failing to strike an accord. For over a year, the UK has rejected all reasonable proposals for an agreement put on the table by the EU negotiator Michel Barnier, without ever presenting realistic alternative negotiating proposals. The UK government cannot maintain all the privileges of the Single Market without accepting any of the Union's own rules and regulations, rules to which they themselves have contributed significantly in 40 years of membership of the European Union;

3. Disavowing in particular the part of the divorce agreement, concluded in January 2020, with respect to the status of Northern Ireland puts at risk the delicate peace process, reached 22 years ago with the Good Friday Agreement, where the EU played a key role of guarantor, unique in the world.

It is therefore clear that no one is above the law, not even the UK government. The firm stance taken by the President of the European Parliament David Sassoli and the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen must therefore be supported without ifs and buts, as we must also back the laborious and tireless work of the negotiator Michel Barnier.

We continue to believe that a fair deal with the UK must be possible, for the important common history, for the shared values and for the good of European and British citizens.

But we must also be ready to face the worst case scenario, not only of an already serious disagreement, but also of the announced breach of international law, which would be devastating for future bilateral relations and beyond.

Moreover, in times of COVID19 pandemic it would be more than desirable for a great nation like the UK to renounce its growing ideological nationalism and recover some of that far-sighted pragmatism that has always characterised it throughout its millenary history.

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