

Brexit: ‘Don’t put politics above prosperity’, Davis urges EU

David Davis has warned against “putting politics above prosperity” in Britain’s post-Brexit relationship with the EU.

In a speech in Berlin, the UK’s Brexit Secretary outlined his hopes for a deal that “allows for the freest possible trade in goods and services”.

He also said he thought it “incredibly unlikely” there would be no deal.

The EU says negotiations cannot move on to trade until questions about the UK “divorce bill”, citizens’ rights and Northern Ireland are resolved.

Political editor Laura Kuenssberg said Mr Davis’s speech was delivered politely but implied “pretty significant frustrations on the UK side with the EU’s attitude”.

In a question and answer session following the speech, a German interviewer got a round of applause for suggesting the UK government looked to be “in chaos”.

Mr Davis replied: “One of the issues in modern politics is that all governments have periods of turbulence.

“This is a period of turbulence, it will pass.”

In his speech to an economic conference organised by the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, he said trade between Germany and the UK was worth 176bn euros a year or “more than a thousand euros to every man, woman and child in each of our countries”.

He said the “close economic ties” with the EU “should continue, if not strengthen” after Brexit, and he warned: “Putting politics above prosperity is never a smart choice”.

‘Think creatively’

The UK was seeking a “deep and comprehensive free trade agreement” of a scope the EU had never seen before as well as “continued close co-operation in highly

regulated areas such as transport, energy and data”, he said.

Britain would use an independent trade policy to lead a “race to the top on quality and standards” rather than engage in a “race to the bottom” that would mean lower standards, he told the audience.

He said the EU and UK needed to “think creatively” about their post-Brexit relationship but stressed the need for a “time limited transition period” to implement the new arrangements.

“And that would mean access to the UK and European markets would continue on current terms. Keeping both the rights of a European Union member and the obligations of one, such as the role of the European Court of Justice.

“That also means staying in all the EU regulators and agencies during that limited period. Which would be about two years.”

Financial obligations

He added that tariff-free trade should be maintained and there must be an “effective dispute mechanism” for any disputes that may arise, that should be neither the UK courts, nor the European Court of Justice.

“It must be appropriate for both sides so that it can give business the confidence it needs that this partnership will endure.”

In a question and answer session following his speech, Mr Davis laughed off a question about whether the UK would be prepared to pay 60bn euros to settle its financial obligations.

He said the UK’s aim was that “nobody will have to pay more ... nobody will receive less” but would not give a figure that the UK would be prepared to pay.

Asked if he thought the Brexit negotiations would end in “no deal”, he said: “I think that’s incredibly unlikely.”

While the UK government has not put a figure on the amount it is prepared to pay to settle the UK’s obligations but it has been estimated at 20bn euros (about £18bn).

The Sun newspaper reported on Thursday that the prime minister was preparing to offer an additional £20bn to the EU to clear the way for talks about a transitional and future trade deal. Downing Street described that as “yet more speculation”.

EU sources told the last week that the UK had only two weeks left to make progress on the so-called withdrawal issues, including the amount the UK will pay as it leaves and Mr Davis’s EU counterpart Michel Barnier said “time is pressing” to get agreement on the bill.

Source: <https://jacksonobserver.com/brexit-dont-put-politics-above-prosperity-davis-urges-eu/>

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