



European Council

**Brussels, 20 March 2019
(OR. en)**

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BXT 21

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Request by the United Kingdom for an extension under Article 50 TEU

Delegations will find attached a letter of 20 March 2019 from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the President of the European Council.



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 March 2019

Dear Donald

The UK Government's policy remains to leave the European Union in an orderly manner on the basis of the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration agreed in November, complemented by the Joint Instrument and supplement to the Political Declaration President Juncker and I agreed on 11 March.

You will be aware that before the House of Commons rejected the deal for a second time on 12 March, I warned in a speech in Grimsby that the consequences of failing to endorse the deal were unpredictable and potentially deeply unpalatable. The House of Commons did not vote in favour of the deal. The following day it voted against leaving the EU without a negotiated deal. The day after that it supported a Government motion that proposed a short extension to the Article 50 period if the House supported a meaningful vote before this week's European Council. The motion also made clear that if this had not happened, a longer extension would oblige the UK to call elections to the European Parliament. I do not believe that it would be in either of our interests for the UK to hold European Parliament elections.

I had intended to bring the vote back to the House of Commons this week. The Speaker of the House of Commons said on Monday that in order for a further meaningful vote to be brought back to the House of Commons, the agreement would have to be "*fundamentally different—not different in terms of wording, but different in terms of substance*". Some Members of Parliament have interpreted that this means a further change to the deal. This position has made it impossible in practice to call a further vote in advance of the European Council. However, it remains my intention to bring the deal back to the House.

In advance of that vote, I would be grateful if the European Council could therefore approve the supplementary documents that President Juncker and I agreed in Strasbourg, putting the Government in a position to bring these agreements to the House and confirming the changes to the Government's proposition to Parliament. I also intend to bring forward further domestic proposals that confirm my previous commitments to protect our internal market,

given the concerns expressed about the backstop. On this basis, and in the light of the outcome of the European Council, I intend to put forward a motion as soon as possible under section 13 of the Withdrawal Act 2018 and make the argument for the orderly withdrawal and strong future partnership the UK economy, its citizens' security and the continent's future, demands.

If the motion is passed, I am confident that Parliament will proceed to ratify the deal constructively. But this will clearly not be completed before 29 March 2019. In our legal system, the Government will need to take a Bill through both Houses of Parliament to enact our commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement into domestic law. While we will consult with the Opposition in the usual way to plan the passage of the Bill as quickly and smoothly as possible, the timetable for this is inevitably uncertain at this stage. I am therefore writing to inform the European Council that the UK is seeking an extension to the Article 50 period under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union, including as applied by Article 106a of the Euratom Treaty, until 30 June 2019.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to set out this position to our colleagues on Thursday.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. May', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.