

EU summit: The deal delivers an orderly Brexit. Now it is time for the Parliaments to have their say

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Following the approval by EU heads of state and government of the UK withdrawal agreement and political declaration on future relations, S&D Group leader Udo Bullmann and S&D Group spokesperson for Brexit Roberto Gualtieri said:

“Today is a crucial step towards the UK leaving the EU. It is now up to the UK and European Parliament to scrutinise both documents in detail and vote on them. Our group has always considered Brexit a historic mistake and a decision that can be reversed if the UK was to change its mind. However, we have worked in a responsible way to ensure that the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union would happen in an orderly manner, minimising its negative consequences.

“The Withdrawal Agreement adopted today by the European Council delivers such objectives, and we congratulate Michel Barnier and his team for the extraordinary work and for the close cooperation with the European Parliament. The text of the Withdrawal Agreement ensures that the rights of EU and UK citizens are preserved, that all financial commitments shall be honoured, that there is no hardening of the border in Ireland, and the Good Friday Agreement is protected in its entirety.

“We have contributed to achieve these results, and while we are particularly glad for what we have achieved on citizens’ rights, we will be extremely vigilant in securing a consistent and fair implementation of this part of the agreement.

“On the political declaration, that gives a broad outline of what future EU-UK relations will look like, we are pleased that the European Parliament’s concerns have been taken into account. We have always said we want as close a relationship as possible, so the reference to a possible association agreement is positive. It is important that whatever the final EU-UK relationship looks like, it must not damage the integrity of the single market or the customs union and must not be allowed to undercut the EU’s social, environmental or labour standards. The autonomy of the EU legal order must be fully safeguarded, and the prerogatives of the European Parliament must be respected, including in the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement.

“We have some concerns over the section on mobility of people. We must not end up in a situation where the movement of citizens is heavily restricted, while goods and services continue to circulate freely. We repeat, once again, that the four freedoms are indivisible.

“The political declaration defines a framework. Once the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified, there is a huge amount of work to be done to arrive at a mutually beneficial future relationship between the EU27 and the UK. It is vital that we maintain the unity of the EU27 and between institutions. We have established an effective working method where the Parliament’s concerns have been taken into account

throughout the process. This must now be continued when negotiating the final EU-UK relationship.”