



Press Release – Immediate

CONSERVATIVE GROUP FOR EUROPE PUBLISHES BREXIT PAPER '*STARTING TO BUILD BRITAIN'S POST-BREXIT FUTURE*' ON THE DAY THE WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT BILL (WAB) BEGINS ITS COMMITTEE STAGES

Today the Conservative Group for Europe (CGE) published a sweeping Brexit paper for Conservative MPs and others outlining the way forward, warning of the risks of a hard Brexit and urging the Prime Minister not to rule out an extension to the Transition Period if a deal cannot be reached before 31 December 2020. Given the stakes involved it is better to get this right than to create a new 'No Deal' cliff that will, amongst other things, risk chilling business confidence and investment throughout 2020.

The publication coincides with the first day of the committee stage of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB) and is intended to remind Conservative MPs of the very real dangers of both a 'hard' Brexit and of a 'No Deal' outcome. It aims to alert them to the issues that need to be raised going in to the negotiation of the new relationship – including achieving close regulatory alignment so as to maximise access to EU markets; creating new frameworks for co-operation in areas such as foreign policy, crime, security, science and higher education and ensuring the preservation of our own Union.

No comprehensive free trade deal has ever been negotiated by the EU—or probably by any other major bloc—in a mere 11 months (rather less to accommodate the ratification processes needed in the Parliaments of the UK and all EU member states).

As the crisis in Iran/Iraq shows, it is of critical importance for the UK to be able to work in close alignment with leading EU countries if we are to enjoy key leverage in world affairs. This will require a robust framework for cooperation and political dialogue. The paper argues that once 'Brexit' has occurred on 31st January 2020, it will be important for a new and less confrontational approach to be adopted and for the emphasis to be on building new frameworks and ways of working together.

Commenting on the release of the report, the Group's Chair, the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC stated:

"The paper shows that serious political and economic issues remain outstanding.

"As the United Kingdom leaves the EU at the end of this month and enters the Transition Period these issues must be dealt with. How the Government responds will impact the future unity of the United Kingdom, our security, our economy as well as our reputation and influence in the wider world.

“The Prime Minister has urged national unity, but this not mean simply abiding by his Brexit plan. The negotiations this year will be the most complex and consequential in the Brexit process.

“A new and less confrontational approach must be adopted. Should a future trade deal not be completed by the end of 2020 - and precedent suggests it won't be - the Prime Minister must be sensible and pragmatic by remaining open to an extension of the Transition arrangements rather than creating new crises around the cliff-edge of a no deal Brexit on 31st December 2020.

By providing an overview of the potential impacts of a hard Brexit, the report should guide Conservative MPs both during the Committee stage of the Government's Brexit legislation, which commences today, and beyond.”

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Notes to Editors

For more press information or interviews etc, contact Simon Saunders, 07576803110, campaigns@conservativegroupforeurope.org.uk

A full version of the report can be found [here](#).

The **Conservative Group for Europe** Founded almost 50 years ago, the Conservative Group for Europe is an organisation committed to a positive and constructive approach to the UK's relationship with the European Union.

The Group maintains that it is in the interests of the United Kingdom, the European Union and the wider world that the UK maintains the closest, practicable political, economic, social and security relationship with its friends, partners and allies in the European Union.

For more information visit: www.conservativegroupforeurope.org.uk