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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Monday 26 June 2017**

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# House of Commons

*Monday 26 June 2017*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Speaker's Statement

2.34 pm

**Mr Speaker:** I have a short statement to make covering three separate matters.

The House was informed before the general election that, following the shocking attack on Westminster bridge and these Houses of Parliament in March, the Lord Speaker and I commissioned an external independent review of how the perimeter of the parliamentary estate, including outbuildings, is secured and protected. At the same time, the Clerks of both Houses commissioned an externally-led review of the lessons learned from the operation inside Parliament of the incident management framework. The report of the first review has now been received and formal delivery of the second is imminent. Both will be carefully considered. I can assure the House that appropriate action will be taken swiftly and decisively.

As colleagues will be aware, Parliament's IT service was subjected to a sustained and determined cyber-attack over the weekend. Parliament has robust measures in place to protect all of our accounts and systems. In order to protect our core network and systems, it was

necessary temporarily to restrict remote access to the network, which meant that some colleagues were unable to access their email accounts. Good progress is being made in restoring remote access. Constituency offices have been given priority so that our critical work in constituencies can continue.

Parliament's first priority has been to ensure that the business of both Houses can continue. It is self-evident that this has been achieved, and I am sure colleagues will join me in thanking all of those parliamentary staff who have worked intensively over the past few days to ensure that our parliamentary democracy can operate freely.

On Thursday last, I informed the House about arrangements for the election of Deputy Speakers. Nominations are due tomorrow and the ballot will be held on Wednesday morning. I thought it would be helpful to all Members if I informed the House now, rather than late tomorrow afternoon when nominations close, that I have decided, after consultation with the Clerks and in the light of technical advice from the Electoral Reform Society, which is the House's adviser on ballots, that if—and I stress if—there is only one candidate from the Conservative side of the House and there are more than two candidates from the other side, the name of the sole Conservative candidate will not be on the ballot paper and will be declared in due course as elected as First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, in much the same way as happens when there is an unopposed candidate for the Chair of a Select Committee.

I hope that this will help Members in all parts of the House to deal with the perceived complexities of the single transferable vote system to which we are bound by the Standing Orders. If—I recognise that this is in the realms of conjecture—colleagues are in any way puzzled by its operation, they are welcome to seek advice from the Public Bill Office, the Library or, indeed, Wikipedia.

## European Council

2.38 pm

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on last week's European Council, and on the proposals we are publishing today, which, on a reciprocal basis, seek to give reassurance and certainty to EU citizens who have made their homes and lives in our country.

This Council followed the formal start of the negotiations for the United Kingdom's departure from the EU, as well as marking the first anniversary of the referendum that led to that decision. In that referendum, the British people chose to take back control of our laws, our money and our borders, to restore supremacy to this Parliament, and to reclaim our sense of national self-determination, and this Government will fulfil the democratic will of the British people.

But the referendum was not a vote to turn our backs on our friends and neighbours. Indeed, as we become ever more internationalist in our outlook, and as we build the global Britain we want to see, we will continue to be reliable partners, willing allies and close friends with all the member states of the European Union. We want to work with one another to ensure that we are all safer, more secure and more prosperous through our continued friendship. We want to buy each other's goods and services and trade as freely as possible. We will continue to celebrate and defend the liberal democratic values that we share, and to project those values that are the foundation of our freedoms and our way of life. In short, we want to build what I have described as a new, deep and special partnership between a confident, self-governing, global Britain and all our friends and allies in the European Union.

That is the positive and constructive spirit in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union began the formal negotiations last week, and it is the same spirit in which the United Kingdom made a full contribution to all the issues at this Council, including on security, migration, climate change and trade.

On security, I thanked our European partners for their condolences and for their resolve in standing with us following the appalling terrorist attacks that the UK has suffered in recent weeks. These attacks have seen citizens from across Europe tragically killed and injured, but they have also seen our citizens standing together in some of the most inspiring ways. At London Bridge, we saw a Spanish banker tragically killed as he rushed to the aid of a woman being attacked. We saw a Romanian baker fighting off the terrorists and giving shelter to Londoners in his bakery. These moments of heroism show that such attacks on our way of life, far from dividing us, will only ever serve to strengthen our shared unity and resolve.

But these attacks also show that we need to respond to a new trend in the threat we face, as terrorism breeds terrorism and perpetrators are inspired to attack by copying one another using the crudest of means. Therefore, building on the bilateral agreement I reached with President Macron earlier this month, at this Council I argued that we must come together to defeat the hateful and extremist ideologies that inspire these attacks, and to stop the internet being used as a safe space for extremists. When one third of all links to Daesh propaganda are shared

within the first hour of release, it is not enough for technology companies to respond reactively to extremist content on their platforms. The Council therefore agreed to put pressure on these companies to do more to remove this content automatically, and also to ensure that law-enforcement agencies can access encrypted data. That was a significant step forward. We will continue to work together with our European partners to combat this evil, to defend our values and to keep our citizens safe.

Let me turn to other issues. On migration, the Council recommitted to the comprehensive approach that the UK has advocated, dealing with the drivers of migration while also doing more to stem the flow. At the summit I confirmed a new UK commitment of £75 million to meet urgent humanitarian needs in the central Mediterranean, while also facilitating voluntary returns of migrants making these treacherous journeys.

On trade, as the UK leaves the European Union we will be forging trade deals around the world with old friends and new allies alike, but that will not undermine the EU's trade agenda; it is not even in competition with it. Therefore, for as long as we remain part of the EU, we will continue to press for an ambitious trade agenda that can deliver jobs and growth across the continent. That is what I did at this Council, where there was a particular focus on the work towards deals with Japan, Mexico and the Mercosur bloc of South American countries.

On climate change, the Council reaffirmed the commitment of all member states to fully implement the Paris agreement. The UK has already reaffirmed its own commitment, and I have expressed my disappointment to President Trump that he has taken a different decision. We will continue to make the case to our American allies to think again.

Turning to citizens' rights, EU citizens make an invaluable contribution to our United Kingdom: to our economy, our public services and our everyday lives. They are an integral part of the economic, cultural and social fabric of our country, and I have always been clear that I want to protect their rights. That is why I initially sought an agreement on this before we triggered article 50, and it is why I am making it an immediate priority at the beginning of the negotiations.

But that agreement must be reciprocal because we must protect the rights of UK citizens living in EU member states, too. At the Council, I set out some of the principles that I believe should underlie that reciprocal agreement, and there was a very positive response from individual leaders and a strong sense of mutual good will in trying to reach such an agreement as soon as possible. So today we are publishing detailed proposals to do exactly that. Let me set out the key points for the House.

First, we want certainty. I know that there has been some anxiety about what would happen to EU citizens at the point we leave the European Union. Today I want to put that anxiety to rest. I want to completely reassure people that under these plans no EU citizen currently in the UK lawfully will be asked to leave at the point the UK leaves the EU. We want you to stay.

Second, any EU citizen in the UK with five years' continuous residence at a specified cut-off date will be granted settled status. They will be treated as if they were UK citizens for healthcare, education, benefits

and pensions, while any EU citizens with less than five years' residence, who have arrived before the specified cut-off date, will be able to stay until they have the five years' residence and apply for UK settled status.

Third, the specified cut-off date will be the subject of discussions, but it will be no earlier than the date on which we triggered article 50 and no later than the date on which we leave the EU. Fourth, no families will be split up. Family dependants who join a qualifying EU citizen here before the UK's exit will be able to apply for settled status after five years. After the UK has left the European Union, EU citizens with settled status will be able to bring family members from overseas on the same terms as British nationals.

Fifth, there will be no cliff edge: there will be a grace period of up to two years to allow people to regularise their status. Those EU citizens who arrived in the UK after the specified cut-off date will be allowed to remain in the UK for at least a temporary period, and may still become eligible to settle permanently. Sixth, the system of registration that citizens go through will be as streamlined and light-touch as possible, and we intend to remove some of the technical requirements currently needed to obtain permanent residence under EU rules. For example, we will not require anyone to demonstrate that they have held comprehensive sickness insurance.

Seventh, we expect this offer to be extended on a reciprocal basis to nationals of Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, and the reciprocal agreement on citizens' rights will apply to the entire United Kingdom and Gibraltar. Eighth, this is all without prejudice to the common travel area arrangements that exist between the UK and Ireland. We will preserve the freedoms that UK and Irish nationals currently enjoy in each other's states, and Irish citizens will not need to apply for permanent residence to protect these entitlements.

Finally, the UK will continue to export and uprate the UK state pension and provide associated healthcare cover within the EU. We will continue to protect the export of other benefits and associated healthcare cover, where the individual is in receipt of those benefits on the specified cut-off date. Subject to negotiations, we want to continue participating in the European health insurance card scheme, so that UK card holders could continue to benefit from free or reduced-cost healthcare while on a temporary stay in the EU, and vice-versa for EU card holders visiting the UK.

This is a fair and serious offer. Our obligations in the withdrawal treaty with the EU will be binding on the UK as a matter of international law. We will incorporate commitments into UK law guaranteeing that we will stand firmly by our part of the deal. Our offer will give those 3 million EU citizens in the UK certainty about the future of their lives, and a reciprocal agreement will provide the same certainty for the more than 1 million UK citizens who are living in the European Union.

One year on from that momentous decision to leave the European Union, let us remember what we are seeking to achieve with these negotiations. We are withdrawing from a system of treaties and bureaucracy that does not work for us, but we are not withdrawing from the values and solidarity that we share with our European neighbours.

As a confident, outward-looking and self-governing nation, we know that it is not just our past that is entwined in the fortunes of our friends and neighbours;

it is our future, too. That is why we want this new, deep and special partnership, and it is why we approach these negotiations with optimism. A good deal for Britain and a good deal for Europe are not competing alternatives; they are the best single path to a brighter future for all our children and grandchildren. That, I believe, is the future that the British people voted for, and that is the future that I want us to secure. I commend this statement to the House.

2.49 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): Mr Speaker, may I join you in thanking all staff of the House of Commons for all the work they did over the weekend to ensure that our electronic systems are safe? I would be grateful if you passed that message on to staff.

I thank the Prime Minister for the advance copy of her statement. Sixty-eight days ago, the Prime Minister stood on the steps of Downing Street and asked the country to give her a strong mandate to negotiate Brexit. She offered little by way of strategy or plan, but more by way of hollow soundbites and grandstanding. For the past six months, the Prime Minister has stuck to her mantra—

“no deal is better than a bad deal”—

and continued with her threat to turn Britain into an offshore tax haven aimed at undercutting the European Union by ripping up regulation, hacking back public services and leading a race to the bottom in pay and conditions. Well, the British people saw through that rhetoric and the threats and, instead of giving the Prime Minister the mandate she wanted, they rejected in large numbers the deregulated low-wage future that the Conservative party has in mind for this country.

The Prime Minister wanted a landslide and she lost her majority. Now, her mandate is in tatters, but she still insists she is the best person to get a good deal for Britain, and incredibly believes that she is the best person to strike a deal with the very people she spent the past six months threatening and hectoring. The truth is that this country needs a new approach to Brexit that a Tory Government simply cannot deliver. They are taking Britain down a reckless path, prepared to put jobs and living standards at risk just for the Prime Minister to maintain support within her party and to keep her Government in office.

The cracks are already beginning to appear. While some in the Conservative party want to move towards Labour's approach to Brexit, at least in terms of protecting jobs, trade and the economy, the hard-right voices in her Cabinet and on her Back Benches, are still determined to force Britain over a cliff edge. The Prime Minister needs to ignore them; she needs now to listen. So I ask her, as she has promised to restore supremacy to this Parliament, will she now be more transparent and involve it properly in the Brexit negotiation process? Will she now finally rule out the possibility of no deal being a viable option for the country? [*Interruption.*] The choice is hers.

The Prime Minister went to Brussels last week to make what she described as a “generous offer” to EU nationals in this country. The truth is that it is too little, too late. That could and should have been done a year ago when Labour put that very proposal to the House of Commons. By making an offer only after negotiations

[Jeremy Corbyn]

have begun, the Prime Minister has dragged the issue of citizens and families deep into the complex and delicate negotiations of our future trade relations with the European Union, which she herself has been willing to say may result in failure.

This is not a generous offer. This is confirmation that the Government are prepared to use people as bargaining chips. So can the Prime Minister now confirm what will happen to her offer to nationals in this country if no deal is reached? What happens to the rights of family reunion that EU citizens are currently entitled to? Does the Prime Minister envisage that the five-year period that EU nationals must accumulate here in Britain will be the same for British citizens who want to retain the right to live in other parts of the European Union? Were these proposals drawn up to take into account the impact on our public services, especially the national health service, where there is already great concern over falling numbers of nurses and doctors?

What makes this situation more remarkable is what we learned this weekend from the former Chancellor of the Exchequer—that immediately after last year's referendum, the Government were willing to give assurances to EU nationals in this country. However, that was blocked in the Cabinet by the Prime Minister herself. This is people's lives we are talking about—our neighbours, friends, husbands, wives and children. The Prime Minister clearly did not care about them then. Why should they believe she cares about them now?

The country needs a change of direction; people are tired of tough talk from a weak Government and a weak Prime Minister. The Government need to listen, put the national interest first and deliver a Brexit for the many, not the few—one that puts jobs, the economy and living standards first by building a new partnership with the European Union on the basis of common interests and common values, and one that protects living standards and promotes human rights through new trade deals throughout the world. That is what Labour would do.

The Prime Minister has no mandate at home and no mandate abroad. Is it not the case that it would only be a Labour Government who work for the whole country who could deliver a Brexit that works for all and protects those jobs and living standards that are at risk while this Government remain in office?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman talked about a variety of issues. He talked about Parliament and transparency. We have been very clear that there will be a vote in this Parliament on the deal that has been negotiated with the European Union, and we expect that to take place before the European Parliament has an opportunity to vote on it. There will be many opportunities—in legislation and in other ways—in the coming weeks and months for Parliament to make its views known on these various matters.

Let me come on to the position that the right hon. Gentleman referred to in relation to workers' rights. We are very clear, as I was in the objectives that I set out in the Lancaster House speech in January, and as I have continued to set out, in the article 50 letter and elsewhere, that we want to protect workers' rights—indeed, we want to enhance workers' rights.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about there being no plan. I set out our objectives in that Lancaster House speech and in the article 50 letter, and have continued to set out those objectives, whereas the Labour party has had seven plans on Brexit in nine months. We have members of the Labour party Front Bench—the shadow Home Secretary, the shadow Chief Secretary and the shadow Attorney General—who want to retain free movement. We have 35 Labour MPs who want to retain membership of the single market. Neither of those, as far as I am aware, were actually in the Labour party manifesto that people stood on at the last election.

Then we get on to the whole issue of the negotiations on EU citizens and their rights here in the United Kingdom. I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman that I find it bizarre, if not worrying, that, in the position he holds, he is willing to stand in this House and say he has no care for UK citizens living in the European Union, because that is what he is saying. I said at an early stage that we wanted to address the EU citizens' rights issue early. The European Union were clear that there was no negotiation before notification. It is one of the first issues that we are addressing after notification. They were clear it had to be undertaken on a reciprocal basis, and they were clear that, whatever the United Kingdom said, the European Union would still be arguing about its proposals in relation to the protection of rights for EU citizens. So people who say that we should not be dealing with this on a reciprocal basis simply do not understand what negotiations are about, because the other side will be negotiating on these issues.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about the issue of no deal being better than a bad deal. I will tell him what I worry about in terms of a bad deal: I worry about those who appear to suggest in Europe that we should be punished in some sense for leaving the European Union, and I worry about those here—from what he says, I think the Leader of the Opposition is in this particular camp—who say we should take any deal, regardless of the bill and regardless of the circumstances. He would negotiate the worst deal with the biggest possible bill.

Finally, the right hon. Gentleman talks about wanting a future relationship based on a partnership of shared values with trade deals across the world. That is exactly what I said in my statement, so I suggest he start supporting the Government on their Brexit arrangements.

**Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con):** Given Brexit and our vital red lines on the European Court, and the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972, does my right hon. Friend agree that a reasonable framework to protect reciprocal citizens' rights while making no concession at all on preserving our own Westminster jurisdiction and our own judicial sovereignty would be a tribunal system such as I outlined in the House last week which would be along similar lines to the EFTA Court and a parallel source of law agreement?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend raises an interesting proposal. Of course, we are looking at a variety of arrangements for the enforcement of agreements that we come to. In relation to the EU citizens' rights, if these form part of the withdrawal treaty, they will be enshrined in international law. But we should also recognise that our courts are world-renowned—they are respected around the world—and what I want to see, and would expect, is that these citizens' rights for EU citizens in the

UK would be upheld and enforced by our courts in the same way as UK citizens' rights are upheld and enforced by our courts.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): With your forbearance, Mr Speaker, I will make some short remarks on the sad passing of Gordon Wilson, who was Member of Parliament for Dundee East from 1974 to 1987. I am sure that everyone in the House would wish to pass their condolences on to Gordon's family. Those of us on the SNP Benches were honoured to have Gordon's wisdom, wit and intelligence with us for many, many decades. Indeed, he spoke with me on Wednesday before I entered the Chamber to respond to the Queen's Speech. He will be sadly missed by all of us, and particularly by those of us on these Benches.

I thank the Prime Minister for advance sight of the Government's plan for EU citizens. It was more than concerning to open the document designed to settle the lives of many of our EU citizens here to discover that it leaves many more questions than it provides answers. The Prime Minister went to Brussels last week and presented a plan for EU nationals. It fell short of expectations, with Dutch President Mark Rutte stating that there are

"thousands of questions to ask"

about the proposal. Will the Prime Minister confirm that the Joint Ministerial Committee was consulted on the proposals she has published today? When will she honour the pledge of a united United Kingdom approach to Brexit and give Scotland a place at the table in negotiations? Has the Prime Minister costed the plan for EU nationals, which she presented to the EU 27 last week, and when will the costings be laid before the House? Will she confirm that EU citizens in Scotland will not have to fill out the 85-page paper form for residency?

In the early hours after the EU referendum result, Scotland's First Minister called loud and clear for the Prime Minister to unilaterally guarantee EU citizens' rights. It is therefore shocking to learn in the *Evening Standard* that the then Prime Minister had pledged to do just that, but the current Prime Minister blocked the plan. Does the Prime Minister accept she was wrong, and will she now do the right and honourable thing and reassure thousands of concerned EU nationals living in the UK today by unilaterally guaranteeing their rights? We created these circumstances; we should be showing leadership.

We welcome the EU summit conclusions, especially those on jobs, growth and competitiveness. The SNP Government were the first Government in the UK to publish a plan for Brexit—we put the single market at the heart of that—and we call again on the Prime Minister to keep the UK in the single market to protect thousands of jobs in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Additional summit conclusions on the Paris agreement are a very welcome step in ensuring that the agreement is implemented following the US withdrawal last month. The Prime Minister must tell the House what the UK's next steps will be in implementing the agreement in co-operation with our EU friends and neighbours.

I welcome the announcement today of the uprating of pensions for those living in the EU, but will the Prime Minister extend that to pensioners living in other parts of the world who currently do not benefit from uprating?

Finally, on behalf of those on the SNP Benches, I send best wishes to the Estonian President ahead of the European Estonian presidency taking over on 1 July, and give thanks to the Maltese presidency which is coming to an end this week.

**The Prime Minister:** First, may I join the hon. Gentleman in passing condolences to the family and friends of Gordon Wilson? I am sorry to hear of his passing.

The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of issues. I reiterate the point about the process of application. He referred to the 85-page application paper. As I said in my statement, the Home Office is working to introduce a streamlined, light-touch approach so that people will not have to apply on an 85-page paper.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the story in the *Evening Standard*. I have to say that that is not my recollection. What we are doing today is setting out what I believe is a fair and serious offer to EU citizens staying here in the United Kingdom, but we want to have a care—I repeat the point I made to the Leader of the Opposition—for those UK citizens living in the European Union.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that during the Scottish independence referendum the First Minister told EU nationals that, if an independent Scotland were not allowed to rejoin the EU,

"they would lose the right to stay here."

We are not saying that to EU nationals here in the United Kingdom. We are saying, "We want you to stay and this paper is the basis on which we will ensure that you can stay, and nobody will be forced to leave."

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on her policy, which will bring many benefits to the UK and the rest of the EU. Can she tell the House a little more about how far we can go in negotiating free trade agreements with non-EU countries before we leave, and when we will learn how we can spend all the money we are going to save?

**The Prime Minister:** As my right hon. Friend will know, we proposed during the election campaign that some of the money that is returned be spent in a shared prosperity fund in the United Kingdom, which will seek to deal with and remove the disparities within regions and nations and between the parts of the United Kingdom.

On trade deals for the rest of the world, of course legally we cannot sign up to free trade agreements with other parties until we are no longer members of the European Union, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade is doing much work with other countries around the world, such as India and America, to see what trade benefits we can achieve, before we leave the European Union, by removing some of the barriers that currently exist to trade between our countries.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Prime Minister will be aware that EU citizens living and working here are particularly concerned about the status of their children. Can she confirm that a young person of EU parents who has lived in Britain for four years, who is currently studying at a university elsewhere in the EU and who will be over the age of 18 when she returns will be able automatically to return to her parents, and will her parents be required to meet an income threshold?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, that individual would be allowed to return to the United Kingdom. If EU citizens who are living here at the time at which we leave have lived here before the specified cut-off date and have five years' residence, they will get their settled status. If they have less than five years' residence before the cut-off date, they will be able to stay to build up that five years' residence for settled status. For any new people coming afresh to the United Kingdom after we leave the European Union, we will set out those immigration rules in due course and a Bill will go through Parliament, which will enable the right hon. Gentleman to contribute.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): May I urge the Prime Minister to settle this issue as part of an interim deal with the EU, so that those affected do not have to wait for the conclusions of the negotiations?

**The Prime Minister:** I would very much like us to be able to do that by dealing with this at an early stage in the negotiations and by recognising that we all want to ensure that we give people reassurance and that they are no longer anxious about their future. I hope that the European Union will see the benefits of that and that we will be able to address this at an earlier stage than at the end of the negotiations.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): The Prime Minister needs to reassure Members of the European Parliament. I was in Brussels last week and heard petitioners from this country and others talk about their concerns. When I previously asked the Prime Minister whether she would address the European Parliament, she said that she was waiting for an invitation. She must know, however, that she does need an invitation; she can volunteer to address a plenary session of the European Parliament. Will she do that?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration will be meeting some MEPs later today to talk about the proposals we have put forward. I have been in discussions with President Tajani about the possibility of my going over to speak to the European Parliament, and we are looking at the basis and a timetable on which that should happen.

**Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the principal reasons why the British people voted to leave the EU was to reassert the supremacy of this Parliament and the UK courts? Will she confirm that, when we do leave, that will be the position for all citizens resident in the UK, no matter from where they came?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I can confirm that. One of the key differences between the proposals we have put forward and those of the European Union is that it wants the European Court of Justice to continue to have jurisdiction over EU citizens, even after we have left the European Union. I think people were very clear that they did not want the ECJ to have jurisdiction here in the UK. I believe that we have fine courts in this country. They will be able to uphold EU citizens' rights, just as they uphold UK citizens' rights.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Prime Minister did not answer the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). If there are French parents

whose 19-year-old daughter is studying in Paris and they have been living here for more than five years, will that daughter be able to return to live with them here without them having to pass the income threshold? If those parents have been living here for fewer than five years, will they still have all the same rights as if they had been living here for more than five years?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes: if the parents have been living here for the five years, their daughter will be able to return to the United Kingdom on the same basis that she would today. So there will be no new rules that would apply. If they have been living here for fewer than five years, they will be able to accrue the five-year status so that they go to exactly the same position with that settled status.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): The Leader of the Opposition alleged that many Conservative Members were coming over to Labour's way of thinking. Just in case I were tempted, does anyone have any idea what that is?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is always known for his plain speaking and he has put the point in a rather plainer way than I did in response to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): Paragraph 6 of the summit's conclusions refers to "peace and stability" in the world. Was there an opportunity to discuss the situation in Yemen, where 10,000 people have been killed, where the cholera epidemic has reached a fifth of a million people, and where the Saudis and Qataris are now refusing to speak to each other? Surely if there is a role for the EU at the present time, it is to work with the United Kingdom, which holds the pen on Yemen, to try to bring peace to Yemen.

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman raises the serious issue of the situation that exists in Yemen. That has been a matter of concern for some time and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is a growing issue. I am pleased that the United Kingdom has been able to provide some support. Of course, there are issues about ensuring that that support actually gets through to the people who need it.

I will be open with the right hon. Gentleman: there was not a discussion on Yemen specifically at this European Council, but we will continue to work with other member states of the European Union and through our role on the Security Council of the United Nations to try to find a solution, so that we can see a reduction in the humanitarian problems in Yemen and bring peace and stability to that country.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): The Prime Minister has been attempting to resolve the status of EU citizens since well before the triggering of article 50. What more can EU citizens residing in the UK do to put pressure on whoever is standing in the way of an agreement to resolve this issue, which is causing so much heartache to so many people?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend raises an interesting point. The message has to go across in the negotiations that this is a really important issue. It is

about people's futures, and we want to ensure that we remove anxiety and give people reassurance. When I speak to other leaders within Europe, that is the message I get from them, but we need to ensure that the working group that has been set up under the negotiations recognises that and does its work as quickly as possible.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Does the Prime Minister accept that the only way to reassure the 3 million EU citizens who work in, but are starting to leave, our hospitals, schools, care homes and businesses, as well as UK citizens in the EU, is for her immediately and unconditionally to grant full rights to EU citizens in the UK—no ifs, no buts? Anything less will leave them thinking that they are nothing more than a bargaining chip in a crude and cruel game of call my bluff initiated by the Brexiteers sitting next to her.

**The Prime Minister:** We are making clear in the document we have set out today the basis on which we believe a reciprocal arrangement can be made, but we are also making it clear to EU citizens here in the UK that nobody is being asked to leave the United Kingdom. That is one of the most important messages that we can give to people here, because there has been that anxiety. This is a serious offer, and nobody is being asked to leave the United Kingdom.

**Stephen Crabb** (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): I strongly welcome the offer to EU nationals that the Prime Minister is making today and the spirit of generosity and pragmatism with which she makes it. Does she agree that carrying forward that same spirit into the negotiations about the rights of future EU workers gives us the best chance of protecting our own economic interests and securing the comprehensive trade deal that we all want to see?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is right. We want to work in a positive and constructive spirit, because it is in the interests of both sides—the UK and the European Union—to ensure that we get the right offer for EU citizens here and UK citizens in the EU, and also that we get the comprehensive trade deal we want, which will be to not just our benefit but that of the other member states.

**Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): I certainly want the dilemma that EU nationals working and living here are facing to be put to bed so that they can plan for their future, but I also know that my constituents who voted leave wanted the reform of free movement. Will the Prime Minister pledge today to ensure that more of my constituents will be trained to fill any vacancies in both the public and private sectors created by the reform of freedom of movement? If the answer to that is yes, will she commit to come back to the House to explain just how we will do that?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the right hon. Lady for the references she makes and I can give her the assurance. It is absolutely crucial for this country that we ensure that young people are given the skills and training that they need to take up the vacancies and jobs of not only today but the future. That is why we will be reforming technical education. We will introduce changes to ensure we have proper technical education in this country for

what I believe will be the first time. Alongside that, we have an industrial strategy that is about spreading prosperity across the country and ensuring that those job opportunities are available.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): I commend the Prime Minister for the generous offer that she set out, and I hope that we will see an offer that will also benefit British citizens. I was pleased that, in reply to questions from Opposition Members, she said that EU nationals will get the same rights as British citizens but not better rights than British citizens. Will she take full opportunity of using the process to ensure that EU nationals who sadly have come to this country and abused our hospitality by committing crimes can be removed from our country?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend knows very well from one of his previous roles the issue of those who have come to this country and abused, through their criminality, the rights they have been given. I certainly will ensure that we can take action to remove serious and persistent criminals from the UK.

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): How can the cut-off date be earlier than the date we leave the European Union, given that EU citizens are living and working here legally at the moment and that the rights and obligations we have as members continue up until the day we leave, even through the article 50 negotiation process?

**The Prime Minister:** The rights that we have set out and the specified date are about the point at which people are able to qualify for settled status here in the United Kingdom. Of course, as we are members of the European Union, the arrangements that have always existed for us and for those here will continue, but for those who are getting settled status and wish to retain it for the future, the cut-off date is pertinent, and that will be a matter for negotiation.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister chose, exceptionally, to raise this extremely important issue in the Council, but will she confirm that in future all the threads of the negotiations will pass through the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, therefore bringing the negotiation together, in the same way in which the European Council is standing behind Mr Barnier?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union is looking at all those threads, which he is going to pull together. We are very clear that at different stages as we go through the negotiations—in the working groups and so forth—a whole variety of people will be involved, but as we saw last Monday, when my right hon. Friend went to the start of the negotiations opposite Michel Barnier, the status and position that he holds is very clear.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): The Prime Minister does not seem to understand that the election has changed everything and that her extreme, damaging Brexit is dead, so why is she making an offer that, as it affects British nationals living on the continent and EU nationals here, is far less generous than the offer that the EU made to us just two weeks ago?

**The Prime Minister:** There is no “extreme Brexit” that we have been talking about. There is no hard Brexit and there is no soft Brexit; what we want is the right deal for the United Kingdom. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that over 80% of people who voted in the recent election voted for parties that were committed to taking the United Kingdom out of the European Union. We have made a fair and serious offer; I believe it is a generous offer. There is one way in which it is different from the offer that the European Union has made, and that is in relation to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. When people voted in the referendum last year, they voted to ensure that we stopped the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice here in the UK.

**Mr Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the comprehensive offer that she has made to secure the rights of EU citizens in our country, in a bid also to secure the rights of UK citizens in the EU. The next time she meets the Heads of Government in the European Union, can she explain to them that there are rather a lot of remainers in this country who would prefer the Leader of the Opposition to become Prime Minister, but that he says that he would scrap our nuclear weapons in six months, removing part of Europe’s vital defensive shield provided through NATO? Will she make clear the danger of that to them?

**Mr Speaker:** That was very tangentially related to the matters on which the Prime Minister is reporting to us, but we are grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what I think I will charitably call a cerebral meander.

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, Mr Speaker, the European Council did touch on defence issues as well, so it is possible for me to report to my hon. Friend that I did indeed address the importance of the United Kingdom continuing to maintain its defence relationship with other countries in Europe. Our relationship through NATO is very important. Obviously, because of our nuclear deterrent, we are one of the key safeguards of the security and safety of Europe.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The Prime Minister keeps talking about the need for reciprocity, so will she tell the House why she chose not simply to reciprocate the genuinely fair and generous proposal made by the European Commission back in April, which would have guaranteed the existing rights of the 1.2 million UK citizens living elsewhere in EU? That would have saved a lot of time, built up good will instead of ill will, and got the negotiations off to a much better start.

**The Prime Minister:** I think I have pointed out that there are some differences between the two proposals put forward by us and the European Union, through the European Commission. One of the key differences was the suggestion from the European Commission that after we have left the European Union, there should be two classes of citizens here in the UK: UK citizens, whose rights would be guaranteed by the UK courts; and EU citizens, whose rights would be guaranteed by the European Court of Justice. I do not believe that that is right. I believe that all citizens should have their rights guaranteed through our courts.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that no reasonable person could oppose what she has proposed? The only people who do never wanted us to leave in the first place. The idea that a foreign court should rule on the rights of people living here is akin to the outdated colonial approach taken towards China in the unequal treaties of the 19th century.

**The Prime Minister:** I always bow to my hon. Friend’s historical knowledge in the references that he makes, but the point is clear: what we want to see when we leave the European Union is that citizens here in the UK have their rights guaranteed and enforced by UK courts.

**Mr Speaker:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was present himself at the signing of the said treaties. We do not know; we will leave it to speculation.

**Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): Did the Prime Minister have an opportunity to speak to the President of Cyprus and express her support for the settlement talks between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, which are due to recommence in Switzerland on Wednesday?

**The Prime Minister:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place in the Chamber. I did indeed have a bilateral discussion with the President of Cyprus about those talks, and about our hope and expectation because they have come so far. I think that both President Anastasiades and Mr Akinci have taken the discussions to a point that is far closer to a resolution than we have ever seen before, and I hope that we shall be able to take it over the line in the talks that will start in Geneva later this month. The UK, as a co-guarantor, stands ready to play its part in that.

**Mr Shailesh Vara** (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): When EU leaders say that they want EU laws to prevail over their citizens in the UK, what they are effectively saying is that they do not trust our judicial system. When the Prime Minister next meets her EU counterparts, may I suggest that she gently reminds them that many of the companies in their own countries—the companies that drive their economies—actually use English and Welsh contract law, which is enforced in our courts by our judges, and the reason why they use English and Welsh law is that, globally, our judicial system commands greater respect than the judicial systems of Germany, France, Italy and so on?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point, and the nub of it is that our courts are respected around the world. As he says, people choose to use our law because they respect our courts, and they also respect the validity of our law. It is important that citizens in the UK are under the jurisdiction of our courts.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I note that the Prime Minister intends to do away with the technical requirement for comprehensive sickness insurance once a reciprocal arrangement has been reached, but people such as my Lithuanian constituent Diemanta McDuff are suffering as a result of that requirement at present. Despite having been in Scotland for more than five years, she cannot secure permanent residency because she does not have comprehensive sickness insurance. During the last Parliament, the Exiting the European

Union Committee heard evidence that no such insurance product actually exists. Will the Prime Minister do away with that requirement here and now? It is a technical nonsense because these people are using the national health service anyway.

**The Prime Minister:** The requirement for comprehensive sickness insurance is an EU requirement, and as long as we are members of the EU, it will continue to be there. Once we leave, we can indeed remove it.

**James Cleverly** (Braintree) (Con): I welcome the Government's commitment to maintaining the "anything but arms" free trade relationship with the least developed countries. Will she say a little more about the Government's intention to extend free and fair trade to developing countries which are not necessarily on the "least developed countries" list, but which have historically been penalised by the EU's tariff arrangements?

**The Prime Minister:** I assure my hon. Friend that we are looking for a wide range of trade deals with countries around the world when we leave the European Union. I think that those trade deals are important because they bring prosperity, growth and jobs here to the UK, and also because it is free trade that has lifted millions out of poverty around the world. Ensuring that those free trade deals are in place has huge advantages for not just the least developed countries but others, and their citizens, and that will enable us to see growth, jobs and prosperity spread more widely than they are today.

**Mrs Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Prime Minister tell us what discussions took place on co-operation against terrorism? Was there any reference to what happened on the streets of London just over a week ago on al-Quds day, when demonstrators were allowed to shout out blaming Zionists for the Grenfell Tower fire and castigating rabbis and synagogues?

**The Prime Minister:** There was a significant discussion on counter-terrorism and the need for us to co-operate in dealing with this issue. We focused, as I said in my statement, on issues around the internet and on the way in which it is used to promulgate hateful propaganda and to allow terrorists to plan and to have a safe space. We are united in our wish and our determination to take action with the tech companies to ensure that this cannot happen in the future. On the hon. Lady's last point, I would simply say that across the whole House we are clear that there is no place for hate crime or hate speech in this country.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Some 3.2 million EU citizens currently choose to live, work and make their lives in this country. They are well aware that we are leaving the European Union. What does my right hon. Friend believe that that says about their perception of our country's prospects post-Brexit, and what does it say about Opposition Members when millions of EU citizens have more confidence in our country than they do?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that it shows what a great place the United Kingdom is to live and work in, and what great opportunities we have for the future. I am very pleased that those 3.2 million EU citizens have confidence in our country and want to stay here.

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): In her statement, the Prime Minister talked about the drivers of migration, which include climate change, conflicts and extreme poverty. As a country, we have a proud record on international development. Does she agree that as this process moves forward, it is vital that we continue to co-operate closely with other EU countries to tackle extreme poverty, especially in Africa?

**The Prime Minister:** Indeed it is, and I am pleased that we as a country have been able to play our part in dealing with that. As an example, the Somalia conference that we hosted some weeks ago brought together countries from around the world to find ways in which we can continue to support Somalia, which people have been choosing to leave to come to Europe, and to provide greater stability and economic opportunity in that country. The UK has been at the forefront of the compact that we have with Ethiopia to provide economic and job opportunities for people who might otherwise try to migrate to Europe. We will continue to work with our European allies on this.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Does the Prime Minister believe that our new relationship with Europe will enable us to reduce further the significant numbers of European Union nationals in our prisons, which would give further headroom for our hard-pressed prison officers to carry out the vital rehabilitation work that they do so well?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, indeed. We want to ensure that we are able to continue to transfer prisoners from the United Kingdom to their homes states in the European Union, but we also want to ensure that we are able to remove serious and persistent criminals from the United Kingdom, and we will do that.

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): I should like to ask my right hon. and even closer Friend the Prime Minister what reassurance she can give to the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland—particularly its producers and processors—about the rights of workers that will be required so that we can benefit from the increase in trade that that sector will undoubtedly get as a result of Brexit? Will this be marshalled by a work permit system and, if so, will it be capped in Northern Ireland?

**The Prime Minister:** The rules that we will set for people coming into the United Kingdom from the European Union, once we have left it—that is, those who are not already here—will be set out in the new immigration Bill that we will bring to the House following the repeal Bill. I fully recognise the importance of the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland, and that was made clear to me during several visits I have made there in recent months. We want to ensure that, once we have left the European Union, we see greater opportunities for the agri-food sector not only in Northern Ireland but across the whole United Kingdom, which will bring jobs, and greater growth and prosperity.

**Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the typically warm and constructive response from Mr Juncker to these welcome proposals reinforces the need for her to work ever closer with the European Heads of Government to compensate for the vested interests of the EU institutions?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said in my statement, the responses received from individual leaders in the European Union were positive to the proposals that we were putting forward. I can cite the Prime Minister of Poland's positive response to what was said, for example. I think my hon. Friend makes an interesting point.

**Chuka Umunna** (Streatham) (Lab): To follow the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley), the Prime Minister's new governing partner, the Democratic Unionist Party, said in its manifesto that it would seek to deliver a "frictionless border" with the Republic of Ireland and a

"comprehensive free trade and customs agreement with the European Union".

Is it not the case that neither of those objectives can be secured if we leave the European Union without a deal?

**The Prime Minister:** I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the desires to bring about a frictionless border between Northern Ireland and Ireland and to have a comprehensive free trade deal are exactly what the Government are pursuing. That is what was said in my Lancaster House speech, and we are doing it. I met the incoming Taoiseach last week and discussed how we can work with the Irish Government to ensure that we can deliver just that.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): Violent ideologies from far-right Islamists are increasingly appearing online. Will my right hon. Friend provide some more information on what was agreed at the Council on tackling, fining or holding accountable internet companies that carry extremist content or those that are platforms for grooming?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. With extremism that leads to terrorism, whatever the source, we see that people are trying to divide us in this country. That is why the response to all the terrorist attacks that have taken place in recent months—there being different reasons for those attacks having taken place, of course—has been one of unity and unity of purpose of British citizens to ensure that we drive out this hatred from our country. That is so important. In the discussions, we focused on the internet and in particular the industry-led forum, the setting up of which we and others have been discussing with tech companies. We want to see automatic technological solutions for the removal of material from the internet, because at the moment the process of removing extremist material is too slow and allows too many minds to be infiltrated before it is taken down. We want to see the automatic removal of that material.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister has made clear her hostility to the European Court of Justice. What will happen to British citizens living in other EU countries if they are not protected by the Court? Will they become citizens of nowhere?

**The Prime Minister:** As regards the jurisdiction of courts in the United Kingdom, I have made it clear that we should not be subject to the European Court of Justice and that EU citizens' rights here should be protected in a different way. I believe that one of the things that people voted for when they voted to leave the European Union was for the ECJ not to have jurisdiction here in the United Kingdom.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I think the whole country will welcome the agreement that the Conservative and Unionist party has made with the DUP. The Prime Minister's statement referred to the Brexit dividend of over £10 billion that we will save when we are not in the European superstate, and I welcome the half a billion pounds a year going to Northern Ireland. Is that the sort of funding that the Prime Minister thinks will happen in the rest of the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** I can say that we have to look at how we are going to use the money that we will no longer be sending to the European Union. People voted for us not to be sending vast sums of money to the EU every year, and we will have to look at how we use that money. One suggestion that has already been proposed by the Government is the concept of a shared prosperity fund to remove the disparities between different parts of the UK.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Did the Prime Minister have a chance at the European Council to discuss transitional funding arrangements for Wales? She will surely have to have something to say to the people of Wales, who now feel they are being treated as second-class citizens in the United Kingdom. She can magic up billions for Northern Ireland and yet will not give a guarantee on future funding for Wales.

**The Prime Minister:** We have already been very clear on various aspects of European Union funding for farmers, and on the guarantees we have over a period of years, but we want to make sure that, when money comes back from the European Union—money that we no longer give to the European Union—we are able to spend it as effectively as possible in driving improvements across the whole United Kingdom.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Before I came to this place, I used to teach effective negotiation skills. Through the Prime Minister, may I invite the Leader of the Opposition to a free trial period?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes a most generous offer, though I suspect the first thing he will have to do is explain to the Leader of the Opposition what a negotiation actually is.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): I continue the efforts of my right hon. Friends the Members for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) in trying to understand what this will mean for our EU constituents resident here in the UK and their family members. Can the Prime Minister confirm that, under her rules, a Polish nurse on a band 5 salary of under £22,000, who therefore will not meet the income threshold required under the current rules, will not be able to bring her child and partner over to the UK; and that a French teaching assistant on under £17,000 will not be able to bring an elderly relative to the UK? If so, what impact does she think that will have on our public services?

**The Prime Minister:** I repeat what I said earlier. For those EU citizens who are here and who qualify for settled status—either because they already have five

years' residence or because they were here before the cut-off date and are able to build up the qualification for settled status—there will be no extra requirements to enable them to bring family members into the United Kingdom. We are not going to be splitting up those families.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's very clear assurances that, under Brexit, no families will be split up and that there will be no cliff edges for regularising their status. I also welcome the healthcare and pension arrangements. But the impact of Brexit on British businesses that employ EU workers simply cannot be overestimated, especially in the food, drink, farming and health industries in places such as Taunton Deane, so what reassurances can she give British businesses that employ EU citizens?

**The Prime Minister:** First, I emphasise again that there will be no cliff edges and that people will be able to bring family members here. We are not talking about splitting up families, which is a very important message. Once we have left the European Union, we will of course be putting immigration rules in place, but in doing so we will recognise, as we already do with people who come here from outside the European Union, the need to ensure that our economy can access the skills it needs, particularly in shortage occupations. We also want to ensure that people here in the United Kingdom are trained to take those jobs, hence the very important moves the Government are making on technical education.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): The Prime Minister said earlier that no families would be split up, but she said during the general election campaign that she intended to cut net migration to this country to the tens of thousands. Well, there is a problem here, because last year 136,787 people came to this country through the family route. If she is to meet her pledge, she is going to split families up, isn't she?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me be very clear: EU citizens who qualify for settled status will be able to bring family members into the United Kingdom without any extra requirements.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's statement that Britain will become more internationalist after we leave the European Union. With that prospect in mind, could she give further details of her Government's discussions with non-EU countries?

**The Prime Minister:** I am very happy to say that we have already had a number of productive engagements on the issue of future trade with countries across the world, notably with India and America, but with other countries, too. We have had discussions with Australia, New Zealand, China and other countries across the world. There are real opportunities for the UK once we leave the European Union, and we will be making every effort to ensure that we take those opportunities.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The Prime Minister's offer is a step in the right direction, but it is long overdue. As a former Home Secretary, she will know that it is impossible both to grant the rights she

proposes to 3.2 million EU citizens and to fulfil her target of reducing net migration to tens of thousands. Can she confirm today that she has set aside this fanciful target and is going to propose instead to follow the Chancellor's advice about a Brexit that is rich in jobs?

**The Prime Minister:** We all want to ensure that the deal we come to with the European Union will ensure that we have the comprehensive free trade agreement that sees growth, prosperity and jobs here in the UK. That is the aim, but also we will be able to see jobs being brought here as a result of the trade arrangements we will be making around the rest of the world.

**Craig Mackinlay** (South Thanet) (Con): May I pay tribute to the Prime Minister for confirming, once more, that the Conservatives will fulfil the delivery of the referendum result of control of our laws, borders and money? Will she give due assurance that any pressure to allow the European Court of Justice any role on immigration or the future indefinite leave to remain status of EU citizens in this country will be flatly opposed?

**The Prime Minister:** I give my hon. Friend the assurance that, as I said earlier, we believe that assuring the rights of EU citizens living here in the United Kingdom should be done through our courts, not through the ECJ. I will just reiterate the point I made: when many people voted to leave the European Union, one of the things they wanted to ensure was that the ECJ no longer had jurisdiction here in the UK.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Many of us who did not want this country of ours to leave the European Union took that view partly because we believed that leaving would make us more vulnerable and Europe less stable. Will the Prime Minister assure me that discussions took place at the European Council on the security implications of where we are now in Europe, given the increasing threat from Russia, both militarily and in terms of other activities it seems to be getting up to these days?

**The Prime Minister:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that a particular set of discussions related to the activities of Russia and the EU's response; the UK has been one of the countries leading on the requirements in relation to that. We remain clear that the sanctions must stay until the Minsk agreement is fully implemented in relation to the activity Russia has undertaken in Ukraine. We also discussed other security and defence issues, and I was able to reassure the other Heads of State and Government that the UK will retain its role in helping to ensure the security and safety of the European Union. We want to continue to have a defence and security partnership with our European allies.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): May I return to the Prime Minister's welcome comments about the discussions on social media companies hosting hate material? We have led the way in this country on requiring employers proactively to make checks on the legality of prospective employees, landlords to check on prospective tenants and banks to check for money laundering. No such requirements or fines are in place

[Tim Loughton]

for social media companies, so will she now urgently set down a timeline, minimum requirements and the real prospect of significant and meaningful fines for social media companies that continue to act irresponsibly?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. It is precisely because we want to see those companies acting with greater responsibility in this area that we have been discussing with them this industry-led forum for the automatic take-down of material from the internet and that we have galvanised support, not just in the G7, as I did earlier this month, but in the EU Council last Friday. This was international support to ensure that we can put collective pressure on the companies to ensure that they are not carrying this material and that we see the importance and significance of taking this action. We have also discussed the fact that although the first step will be discussions with the companies about what they can do themselves, there is the prospect of legislation if that fails.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I call Darren Jones. [Interruption.] He was here a moment ago. I call Mr David Hanson.

**David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab):** Will the Prime Minister assure the House that she has made progress on securing our membership of the European arrest warrant, Eurojust and Europol as part of her discussions? In passing, will she also tell me that the UK Government do know when European citizens enter the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** As regards Eurojust, Europol and the European arrest warrant, those will be matters for the negotiations, but I have made it very clear that we want to retain our security co-operation, not just on counter-terrorism matters but on matters relating to crime.

**Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con):** When we triggered article 50, it was very clear that a new immigration regime would be required. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it was therefore entirely sensible and appropriate to discuss the cut-off date with the EU Commission?

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. New immigration rules will be brought in in the UK for those people who move from the EU to the UK after we have left. It is entirely right and sensible that, in part of the negotiations, we discuss the cut-off date for EU citizens who are here.

**Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op):** I represent many EU citizens who are fearful and indeed tearful about their future prospects, so I welcome some of the clarity that the Prime Minister has brought to the matter. She talks about a streamlined system for applying for status, but many people worry about how they will pay the costs for an entire family to go through the process in short order. Can she give us an indication of what those costs might be and reassure them?

**The Prime Minister:** The Home Office will be looking very carefully at ensuring that the costs are reasonable. It wants to ensure that the streamlined system, which will be a light-touch process, will be easy for people to access and that it will therefore be easy for them to regularise their status.

**Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con):** It is very important to our economy that business continues to invest and that there are no cliff-edge changes to our trading relationships. As well as seeking a fair deal on exit and a new trade deal, will the Prime Minister seek a two or three-year transitional period to give business a total of up to five years to prepare for the future?

**The Prime Minister:** Once we know the basis of our future relationship with the EU, it will be important to recognise that not just business but Government as well may need to have an implementation period when they are able to make the necessary adjustments. How long that period will be will depend on what the new relationship is, and will therefore be part of the discussions that take place during the negotiations.

**David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP):** With tens of thousands of Scottish jobs at risk, will the Prime Minister listen to her Chancellor's warnings and protect our place in the single market?

**The Prime Minister:** As regards Scottish jobs, the most important single market is that of the United Kingdom.

**Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con):** Was the Prime Minister able to convey to her European counterparts in the Council the fact that, in the general election earlier this month, 589 Members of this House were elected on a promise to deliver a comprehensive Brexit?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I was very clear about the view of the electorate and about the position taken in the election by the Government and the majority of people who have come into this House, which was to deliver on the will of the British people as expressed in the referendum.

**Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab):** The Prime Minister said at the beginning of her statement that she wished the UK and the EU to trade as freely as possible in both goods and services. Can she confirm to the House whether any time was spent on developing proposals for the UK to remain both in the single market and the customs union?

**The Prime Minister:** We want to ensure that we have a good, frictionless access to the single market that is as tariff-free as possible. That is what we mean when we talk about a comprehensive free trade agreement, and that comprehensive free trade agreement will be part of the negotiations.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):** European Union citizens in my constituency of Gloucester and their employers, notably the NHS, our university and many businesses, will greatly appreciate the clarity in the Prime Minister's statement today. Will she give us an idea of whether an agreement on this crucial issue,

which affects so many citizens here and in Europe, might be possible before agreement on other issues, and if so, when?

**The Prime Minister:** I am pleased that this issue is one of the first to be addressed in the negotiations. I hope and believe that there is goodwill on both sides to recognise the importance of this issue for citizens both here and in the remaining 27 European Union member states. I cannot give a timeline, because, obviously, there are aspects that still need to be negotiated, and the European Union has said that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. I hope that we will be able to give final reassurance to citizens at an earlier stage.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said that she wants to see the removal of serious and persistent criminals from the UK, and I am sure that we would all agree with that. Will she say a little bit more about how she intends to do that, bearing in mind that she failed to do it in the six or seven years when she was Home Secretary?

**The Prime Minister:** I have to say to the hon. Lady that her portrayal of what happened during the time that I was Home Secretary, and indeed since, is not correct. A significant number of persistent and serious criminals were removed from the United Kingdom. The basis on which it is possible to do that for people who are here as European Union citizens of course is subject to slightly different rules than that for others, and once we are out of the European Union we will be able to adjust that.

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): My constituency has proportionately more EU nationals than any other in the country in respect of how recently they have arrived. I know that they, like me, will warmly welcome the statement, which provides real clarity and which, I hope, will be concluded, as my right hon. Friend has said, earlier than the end of this deal. On social media, may I remind her that not that long ago internet companies were saying that the removal of child sex abuse images automatically was simply impossible? Now, it happens routinely. Extremist material is harder, but does she agree that it can be done?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an important point in drawing that comparison. It did take a while, and hard work, to get the tech companies to the position where they would take the action they have done on child sexual abuse images on the internet. I believe we can do the same with extremism, and that is what we are encouraging them to do.

**Mr Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Hello, Prime Minister.

At the Council, did the Prime Minister manage to raise the issue of the Erasmus+ programme and our continuing work in it? In particular, the deadline for the Erasmus+ grants is October. It takes six months for those grants to be awarded, and another year sometimes for them to be enacted. Will she ensure that any academic, student or young person who is awarded an Erasmus programme is able to come here without additional visa burdens?

**The Prime Minister:** While we are still within the European Union, the current arrangements and the opportunities to apply still apply to the United Kingdom. We have been able to give some certainty over certain programmes and their continuation after we leave the European Union, but even after we have left there will be options for us to find ways in which we can contribute and participate in such programmes.

**Mr Speaker:** We all warmly welcome the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr Russell-Moyle) to the Chamber and to our deliberations.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): I have just returned from the Netherlands with a delegation from the Lords and Commons. On the Dutch Binnenhof tour, I had the opportunity, among other things, to speak to British nationals living and working in the Netherlands. What reassurance can the Prime Minister give to them and to other British nationals living and working across the EU that their rights will be protected, alongside EU rights for those living here?

**The Prime Minister:** The best assurance I can give to those British citizens living in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the European Union is that we have set out a fair deal—a fair offer—to those EU citizens living here, but we are very clear that this must be reciprocal and that those British citizens must have their rights protected as well, and we will continue to argue for that.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): The Prime Minister mentioned the trade deal between Japan and the EU. She will be aware from leaked documents this weekend that a lot of people are concerned that there is no mention of environmental protections—for example, tackling Japan's illegal timber trade or whaling—in the draft agreement. Does she think that those protections should be in there and what does this say about the agreements that we will be negotiating when we leave the EU?

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously, there is still further discussion taking place between the European Union and Japan in relation to that trade deal. Once we have left the European Union and are able to set up such agreements ourselves—Japan is another of the countries we have been talking to—it will be up to us, as part of the negotiations for that trade deal, to set the conditions for that trade agreement.

**Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Returning to the issue of online content, will the Prime Minister confirm whether the Government would be willing to enact legislation should the internet companies not make sufficient progress with the removal of inappropriate content?

**The Prime Minister:** We are certainly willing to consider legislation; this matter is so important. I believe that, with the international pressure and co-operation that we are now building, we will be able to put pressure on the tech companies such that they do this themselves, but we should not rule any option out.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I do not know whether it is in order to blow a raspberry in this House, but that was the reaction of constituents—EU nationals—whom I met at the Partick language hub in

[Patrick Grady]

my constituency on Saturday, when they heard about the reports of this deal. I wonder how many EU nationals the Prime Minister met or consulted in drawing up the proposal she has presented today.

**The Prime Minister:** I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that, like other Members of the House, I have met people in my constituency who are employers of EU nationals concerned about this and people who are EU nationals who are concerned about their position. The detail had not been published at the weekend, but I suggest that he take the detail to his constituents and enable them to see for themselves the fair and serious offer we are making.

**Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister refer earlier to our manifesto commitment to create a UK shared prosperity fund. Even though it was not specifically mentioned in the Queen's Speech, will she confirm that the Government are committed to bringing forward such a fund to replace the EU structural funding that has been so important to places such as Cornwall?

**The Prime Minister:** We want to ensure that when we are no longer sending these huge sums of money to the European Union every year, some of the money that is available can be used in that way. There is a real need to ensure that we do that as effectively as possible so that the money has the maximum impact across all parts of the United Kingdom.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): I am sure that the Prime Minister is aware of the problems already faced by our universities and research sectors because of these uncertainties. What discussions did she have at the Council with other leaders about dealing with these challenges, and will she take the opportunity today to say whether she wants us to stay within the Horizon 2020 programme?

**The Prime Minister:** A number of the programmes and projects that the UK has been part of and benefited from will be part of the negotiations. What I am very clear about—we have made this point consistently with EU circles—is that while we are still in the European Union we should have the same ability to apply to be part of programmes as has been the case previously. One of my concerns is that in some areas, such as university research, I am hearing some anecdotes that universities are finding it harder because of our future. As long as we are in the European Union, we should be able to apply on exactly the same basis as we always have.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** What a rich assortment of distinction. I call Joan Ryan.

**Joan Ryan** (Enfield North) (Lab): The European arrest warrant and its extradition orders have proved a very effective means by which we have seen speedy justice for those who have committed a crime and for victims who want a speedy outcome. What does the Prime Minister envisage as the future of the European arrest warrant? Has she yet discussed that at any point? If not, when does she think it will be discussed?

**The Prime Minister:** As I indicated earlier to the right hon. Member for Delyn (David Hanson), those issues will be part of the negotiations. But I am bound to point out that I stood at this Dispatch Box as Home Secretary and argued for the United Kingdom to remain in the European arrest warrant, during a debate in which the Labour party was trying to stop us getting the legislation through.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Members are chuntering “It’s true” and “It’s not true” from a sedentary position. It is all very well, but it is rather unfair to the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), who wishes to unburden herself of a series of important thoughts that the nation should hear.

**Alison Thewliss:** Every week in my surgery I see constituents who are already worn down by the incompetence, intransigence and unkindness of the Home Office. What steps will the Prime Minister take to give the Home Office adequate funding to deal with all the additional EU nationals who will now need to be processed?

**The Prime Minister:** The Home Office is well able to deal with the issues that it will be addressing, and it will be ensuring, as I indicated in an earlier response, that the process that people will go through will be streamlined and light-touch.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I recently visited a manufacturer in my constituency that exports to the EU. It informed me that it now has to include the risks of Brexit in its export contracts. What advice does the Prime Minister have for manufacturers, such as those in my constituency, that today have to assess the risk that they might end up paying tariffs after we leave the EU?

**The Prime Minister:** What I say to those manufacturers is that I hope they will work with the Government to ensure that we understand the needs of every part of industry in this country as we go forward into the negotiation on the comprehensive free trade agreement. We want to see a tariff-free ability to trade with the European Union, and we will be considering the views and interests of British industry as we do that.

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): The Prime Minister has twice this afternoon responded to questions about the skills challenges that will be created as a result of the reform of freedom of movement by referring to the reform of technical education, but of course the economy will have much greater needs, such as new dentists, doctors, vets and other professionals. On that basis, will she guarantee the funding necessary to ensure that our schools, colleges and universities will be able to meet the skills challenges of a post-Brexit world?

**The Prime Minister:** I have been very clear that we do need to meet those skills challenges; that is why we are bringing in the reforms. The hon. Lady refers to issues within the national health service, but one of the important

steps that the Government have taken is to remove the caps on the number of people who can train as staff in the national health service.

**Annaliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): My question relates to that posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner). If the Prime Minister truly is concerned about the future of British science and European funding, why is there no mention of British science and European funding in this statement, any of the Brexit Bills or the Queen's Speech?

**The Prime Minister:** I suggest that the hon. Lady look at the 12 objectives set out in my Lancaster House speech in January for a negotiated deal with the European Union. We specifically referred to science and innovation.

**Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Much play has been made this afternoon about the supremacy of this place in terms of the repatriation of powers from the European Union, yet there has been no consideration of how the whole governance and structure of the United Kingdom is to be developed, post-Brexit. Will the Government give any consideration to a concurrent constitutional convention that would consider how stable and sustainable governance and distribution of power across the United Kingdom is considered after the Brexit process, including the possibility of a federal UK?

**The Prime Minister:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place; I did not welcome one or two other new hon. Members who have stood up, so I apologise to them for that. I say to the hon. Gentleman that the best way of ensuring good governance and stability across the United Kingdom is maintaining the United Kingdom.

**Mr Speaker:** I, too, welcome the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), who has just served up an interesting hors d'oeuvre. We look forward to his main course before very long.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): There are two excellent universities in York, but they are already challenged by the recruitment and retention of EU staff. Researchers and academics need to move seamlessly between UK and EU universities. How will they accrue their settled status under the Prime Minister's new rules?

**The Prime Minister:** I suggest that the hon. Lady look at the proposals set out today, which make clear the basis on which people are able get their guaranteed

settled status here in the United Kingdom. That will cover people from all walks of life. We want EU citizens who are here to stay. We are not talking about forcing anybody to leave the United Kingdom.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): The Prime Minister has fielded without really answering a number of questions about the longer-term rights of EU nationals to bring their families over here should the need arise in future. Can she now answer the question categorically? Will she give an absolute guarantee that the minimum income requirement that is obstructing so many family reunions for non-EU nationals will never under any circumstances be imposed on any EU national in the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** EU nationals who have been here for five years and have the five years' residence will qualify for settled status. EU nationals who have been here for fewer than five years will be given an opportunity to qualify for that settled status—to stay for those five years in order to qualify. No extra requirements will be imposed on those EU nationals in relation to bringing family members into the United Kingdom. Once we have left the European Union, we will be establishing within the immigration rules the arrangements for EU nationals who then move into the United Kingdom. They will have the same status as those moving here from outside the European Union.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): As part of her recent little tour around Labour-held seats across the country, the Prime Minister stopped for a photograph at a farm in my constituency. Why was there no mention of agriculture in today's statement?

**The Prime Minister:** What I was reporting on were the subjects discussed at the European Council on Friday. I reported faithfully on those subjects.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister confirm that she was aware of the details in the document on EU nationals wanting to remain in the UK when, during the general election, she promised to cut immigration to the tens of thousands? Are the two compatible?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes. In the document, we are talking about the rights of EU citizens living here in the United Kingdom. We are making a fair and serious offer that nobody will be forced to leave the United Kingdom and that families will not be split up. We want people to stay, and this is the document that will enable them to do so.

## Northern Ireland

4.10 pm

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on details of the agreement reached today between the Conservative and Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party, under which the DUP will support the Government on a confidence and supply basis.

Having won the most votes and the largest number of seats in the general election on 8 June by a significant margin, only the Conservative party has the ability and legitimacy to lead the Government our country needs. This agreement delivers the certainty we need in the United Kingdom's national interest at this crucial time. The agreement means that the DUP will support the Government on votes on the Queen's Speech, the Budget, and legislation relating to our exit from the European Union and national security. It will ensure that we can govern in the national interest, strengthening and enhancing the Union, keeping our country safe, delivering prosperity for all and securing a departure from the European Union that benefits all parts of the United Kingdom. To support the agreement, the Government will chair a co-ordination committee involving both parties.

As Members of this House are well aware and as our manifesto made clear, the Conservative party has never been neutral in expressing its support for the Union. As this agreement states, Her Majesty's Government remain fully committed to the Belfast agreement and its successors. This means that we will continue to govern in the interests of all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. These confidence and supply arrangements in no way affect our steadfast commitment to the re-establishment of an inclusive Northern Ireland Executive by this Thursday. The Government will do everything in their power, working alongside the Irish Government, to bring the talks process to a successful conclusion in the short time that remains.

Both the Government and the DUP recognise the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland's history, and the effect this has had on its economy and on people from all parts of the community. The Government are resolute in their determination to deliver for the whole of the United Kingdom. In recognition of our commitment to support growth across all parts of the United Kingdom, we have agreed to provide additional support for the people of Northern Ireland. I hope this part of the agreement will play a positive role in the efforts to re-establish devolved government. Funding would go to a restored Northern Ireland Executive in the same way that the £2.5 billion of financial support and flexibility was made available to that Executive through the 2014 Stormont House agreement and the 2015 "Fresh Start" agreement.

The Government support further co-operation with the Northern Ireland Executive on infrastructure development in Northern Ireland. The UK Government will allocate £200 million a year for two years. The Government and previous Executives have recognised the integral part digital infrastructure plays in opening up new opportunities for growth and connectivity for businesses and consumers. We will therefore contribute £75 million a year for two years to help provide ultrafast

broadband for Northern Ireland, just as we have made funding available for this purpose in communities across the United Kingdom.

The UK Government are committed to working with the Executive and others to work towards a comprehensive and ambitious set of city deals across Northern Ireland to boost investment and help to unlock the full potential of Northern Ireland. This is the sort of targeted, positive intervention the UK Government can make across the UK. It builds on the success of existing deals such as those in Glasgow, Cardiff and Swansea. Since 2014, the UK Government have committed to more than £1 billion-worth of investment in Scotland and Wales through this programme along with other projects. This is a continuation of our determination to be a Government for the whole of the UK.

To target pockets of severe deprivation so that all can benefit from growth and prosperity, the UK Government will also provide £20 million a year for five years to the Northern Ireland Executive. We will also ensure that all parts of the UK are properly reflected in the future UK shared prosperity fund as we exit the European Union.

As our manifesto made clear, we are also increasing our commitment to investment in public services across the UK. That is why we have pledged a minimum of £8 billion in additional NHS funding in real terms over the next five years; it is also why we have pledged to increase funding in real terms per head in every year. Our spending on the NHS in England is also translated into extra spending in Scotland and Wales through the Barnett formula. How that is spent is, of course, a matter for the Scottish and Welsh Governments.

To address immediate priorities in Northern Ireland, the UK Government will also allocate an additional £50 million per year for two years to enable the Executive to address pressures in health and education. Recognising the priority given by the Executive to securing a modern, sustainable health service in Northern Ireland, the UK Government will allocate £100 million per year for two years to support the Northern Ireland Executive's priority of health service transformation.

The Government and the Executive also agree on the importance of support for mental health, particularly recognising the historical impact of Northern Ireland's past on its communities. *[Interruption.]* I am glad the shadow Foreign Secretary finds mental health in Northern Ireland amusing—I find that slightly surprising. The UK Government will provide £10 million per year for five years to support the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver this measure.

Our general election manifesto made clear that there would be no change in the pensions triple lock before 2020. As part of this agreement, both parties have agreed there will be no change to the triple lock for the duration of this Parliament. We further agreed that there will be no change to the universal nature of the winter fuel payment. The Prime Minister said we would listen to what people said during the election campaign, and this is an example of our doing so.

As the party with the most seats at the general election, the Conservative party had a duty to form a Government. It is right that we talk to other parties to seek to ensure that the Government can provide the confidence the country needs at this crucial time. I commend this statement to the House.

4.17 pm

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): This is a shabby and a reckless deal, which it has taken the Government at least £1 billion pounds to buy, and whose true cost for the future of peace in Northern Ireland could be infinitely higher. The Good Friday agreement is rightly seen across the world as a model for other countries seeking to end conflict, but it is also fragile and relies above all on trust, good faith and the impartiality of the British Government. For the Government to put such an agreement in jeopardy just to prop up this dismal Prime Minister is nothing short of a disgrace. So can I ask the First Secretary what legal advice the Government have received on whether today's agreement is compatible with their legal obligations under the Good Friday agreement and whether he will publish that advice today?

I will not waste time discussing the so-called policy agreement set out today; after all, it was not the DUP who forced this Government to ditch their plans to hit pensioners' income—the British people did that on 8 June. No, this agreement is all about the money, so let me first ask the First Secretary for some clarity on the funding. First, how much extra funding will go to support infrastructure, broadband, health and education and tackle deprivation in the rest of the United Kingdom? No one would begrudge the £1 billion extra support in those areas for Northern Ireland, but in Scotland, Wales and the English regions, the needs are just as great, so when will the rest of the country get its share?

Secondly, the agreement says there will be a consultation on reducing VAT on tourism in Northern Ireland. Just a year ago, the current Minister of State with responsibility for security told the House the Government had concluded that the costs of such a VAT cut outweighed the benefits and that it was not something the Government were going to consider. So what has made the Government change their mind? In the light of his commitment to be fair to all parts of the United Kingdom, will he extend this consultation to all parts of the UK, seeking to support their tourism and hospitality industries, and if not, why is he not including the likes of Blackpool, Margate or Colwyn Bay?

Thirdly, and most importantly, can the First Secretary tell us this: where is the extra £1 billion announced today going to come from? During the election he was fond of telling interviewers that there was no magic money tree. So what has happened today? Has he found the key to the secret garden, or is the truth that like everything else that this Government say and do, it can all be ditched if it helps them to hang on to power—no matter who the bedfellows, no matter what the manifesto said, no matter where the money comes from, no matter the unfairness for the rest of Britain, and no matter the consequences for peace? That is no way to lead a Government, and it is definitely no way to run a country.

**Damian Green:** Let me deal with some of the detailed points that the right hon. Lady has made. She seems to think that providing more money for Northern Ireland health and education, and broadband and other parts of infrastructure, in some way makes it less likely that an Executive will be formed. I can assure her that it makes it more likely that an Executive will be formed. She asked about infrastructure help for the rest of the country. I am happy to repeat some of the things I said

in my statement and add to them. We are pledged to provide £8 billion of new money for the health service and £4 billion for education, and we have an overall infrastructure fund of £23 billion, so the rest of the country absolutely will share in the advance in infrastructure spending that we have promised.

The right hon. Lady asks, of course, about how we can afford this. We can afford this because we have a strong economy after seven years of Conservative Government. It takes some nerve for a party that had tens of billions of pounds of unfunded commitments at the election to complain about targeted infrastructure spending and spending specifically designed to help some of the most deprived communities in this country. Labour also had a pledge to nationalise half of British industry and said that it was not going to cost any money because although it would borrow the money, it did not count as borrowing because it would pay it back out of the profits of the industry. I have two things to say to the right hon. Lady: first, if you borrow money it is still borrowing; and secondly, after six months of a Labour Government running an industry there would not be any profits to pay back any of the borrowing.

The right hon. Lady is fundamentally wrong that this does not help, in what is a hugely important week for Northern Ireland, to try to make sure that we restore proper devolved democratic government to Northern Ireland. I think that helping the Executive to be set up will be one of the great achievements of this week. What she has missed is that this extra support—this extra money—goes to all communities in Northern Ireland, run by the Northern Ireland Executive, so that people from all political traditions—all communities—will benefit from it. I would have thought, frankly, that she would welcome that.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** The good doctor—Dr Julian Lewis.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): In the discussions with the Democratic Unionists, did my right hon. Friend make any progress on the question of protection for former service personnel who still face the possibility of prosecution many years after fatal incidents in the period of the troubles?

**Damian Green:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that question. The answer is yes. We seek to ensure proper fairness in the issue he raises and other legacy issues. I am sure that the agreement that comes out of our talks with the DUP will help advance a balanced and fair solution to those issues.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): This is quite simply a pathetic, grubby little deal demonstrating all the worst excesses of pork barrel politics, designed to prop up a Government without a majority and increasingly without any credibility whatsoever. We now know that £1.5 billion is the price that this country will have to pay to keep this shambolic Government in power. The Government warned of a “coalition of chaos”, but this is much, much worse than that, as the social conservatives in the DUP exact their price from the Government.

[Pete Wishart]

This deal is not subject to the normal allocation of funds across the UK, and it will be delivered at the expense of all the other nations of the UK. Only 24 hours ago the Secretary of State for Scotland was categorically assuring us that Scotland would be in line for full Barnett consequential as a result of the DUP deal. Either he was inadvertently misleading the Scots people, or he is so completely out of the loop that he has no idea what is going on, because we now know that Scotland will get nothing—zero, zilch—out of this deal.

What representations has the First Secretary received from the Scotland Office or from any of the new Scottish Members of Parliament who laughably said that they would stand up for Scotland? If the Barnett formula is to be bypassed, what is Scotland going to get out of this? Why has the Barnett formula been bypassed by this deal? This is a huge test for the new Scottish Tory Members of Parliament. They can either stand up for Scotland and Scotland's funding interests, or stand behind this chaotic Government and their new best friends.

**Damian Green:** The hon. Gentleman is so far wide of the mark that it is almost laughable. He says that this comes from the block grant and specifically says that it is outside the Barnett formula. Let me give him some facts about what is happening in Scotland: a city deal for Glasgow, outside the Barnett formula, of £500 million; a city deal for Aberdeen, outside the Barnett formula, of £125 million; and a city deal for Inverness, outside the Barnett formula, of £53 million. Would he like me to go on? There is £5 million for the V&A in Dundee, outside the Barnett formula, £5 million for the Glasgow School of Art and £5 million for the Helensburgh waterfront. Huge amounts of money are going to Scotland from outside as well as inside the Barnett formula. If the Scottish National party does not recognise that, I suggest that its Members go back to their constituencies and find out what is happening in Scotland.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but sadly some have used it to suggest, rather opportunistically, that this means that the Government have changed their policies on equality matters, particularly equal marriage and access to abortion. Perhaps he could use this opportunity to update the House on those issues.

**Damian Green:** I am extremely happy to reassure my right hon. Friend and, indeed, colleagues on both sides of the House that this deal has no impact on those sorts of issues, particularly equal marriage. The agreement covers financial deals, Brexit legislation, security legislation and the Queen's Speech. My right hon. Friend will no doubt have seen in the Queen's Speech the Government's recommitment to equality across all grounds, and that commitment is as strong today as it ever has been.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Further to that point, will the Government now use this to deal with the huge anomaly whereby Northern Ireland women are expected to be charged for abortions in NHS hospitals in Great Britain? Does the First Secretary agree that that is hugely unfair on women

from Northern Ireland who travel to England, Scotland or Wales for an abortion, and that it is unjust for women's rights?

**Damian Green:** I appreciate the strength of the right hon. Lady's convictions. The issue comes under the heading of a health matter and is therefore devolved to Northern Ireland. It is for people in Northern Ireland to decide such issues. It is the logic of devolution that such issues should be decided in the devolved authorities, just as health matters are decided by the Scottish and Welsh Governments. Given that we all, I assume, hope that Northern Ireland should have a devolved Executive, it is for the people of Northern Ireland to decide these matters.

**Stephen Crabb** (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and his personal commitment to ensuring that the imbalances and inequalities that exist in all parts of the United Kingdom are tackled effectively by this Government. Will he say a bit more about how the UK prosperity fund will be used to raise economic output in the poorest parts of the United Kingdom? I encourage him to keep an open mind to some of the ideas that his Welsh colleagues might have for further investment.

**Damian Green:** I am very happy that my right hon. Friend brings up the UK prosperity fund, which we will introduce once Brexit has been completed. Its purpose is precisely to help disadvantaged communities across the whole of the United Kingdom. It is meant to replace the money that has gone to some of our deprived communities through European institutions. I know, for instance, that communities in Cornwall have benefited in that way. Absolutely, communities in Wales, as well as in Scotland, Northern Ireland and other parts of England, such as the north-east, may well benefit from the UK prosperity fund. I am always open to creative ideas from any part of the UK about how best to spend that sort of money.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Let me explain to the Minister why there is concern on this side of the House about these women from Northern Ireland. This is not a devolved matter; it is about when they come to our shores as UK taxpayers and their ability to use UK services. I note that the official agreement says that the Government and the DUP are committed

"to providing health services which meet the needs of everyone, no matter who they are or where they live."

It does not seem like that when it comes to these women. Will the Minister confirm whether the question of their access to abortion in England, or the fact that Northern Irish laws on abortion have been found to violate the UK's human rights responsibilities, were discussed as part of the negotiations? Did the Government make any commitment to the DUP about when this matter comes to the House? Are Northern Irish women simply expected to pay the price of what feels like a forced marriage?

**Damian Green:** I am happy to assure the hon. Lady and the House that the agreement is what is set out. There are no private or side agreements attached to it—it is completely open. Again, I appreciate the strength of feeling she brings to this matter. It is clearly a

political discussion she may wish to bring about in Northern Ireland when we have a devolved Executive there.

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): I welcome the Government's funding for city deals in Northern Ireland and urge them to continue their focus on foreign direct investment into the Province.

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend makes the good point that foreign direct investment is extremely helpful to the Northern Ireland economy, as it is to the UK economy as a whole. It is absolutely the case that we wish to better utilise our embassies and high commissions around the world not just to boost exports, which is traditionally regarded as one of their important roles, but to help foreign direct investment, particularly into those parts of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, that would most benefit from it.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): I thank the First Secretary for advance sight of his statement. My first thought on seeing it was that the Government had scraped the bottom of the pork barrel in reaching an agreement, but I suspect he will learn in the months to come that there is probably no bottom to that particular barrel.

The Government cannot be blind to the fact that this agreement places in jeopardy their role under the Good Friday agreement. That agreement can be secured only if the Government commit to transparency—not just today, but at every step of the way for as long as this agreement lasts. Will we get that transparency?

**Damian Green:** I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman that this agreement hinders the formation of a new Executive and, therefore, the implementation of the Good Friday agreement. I think that this agreement will help the full implementation of the Good Friday agreement. Since the confidence and supply agreement entails support from the Democratic Unionist party for the key areas of the Government's programme in this House, the transparency will come when he observes people going through the Division Lobbies in a public way, as they traditionally do.

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): In welcoming the additional votes that the DUP brings, may I criticise the Government for not being bold enough? As Labour Front Benchers move to the Back Benches, and its Back Benchers move to the Front Bench, a lot of Labour Members are left disaffected, as a number of them do not identify themselves as Leninists or Marxists—and many not even as socialists. Could we send out a warm offer to those discontented Opposition Members to vote with us in the Lobby to deliver this Queen's Speech?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend makes a shrewd point. I would indeed extend that invitation. To be entirely serious, there will be large parts of the Queen's Speech—for instance on economic regeneration and issues such as mental health—on which I genuinely hope that we will get support from all parts of the House. There are many issues to which partisan politics will not necessarily apply, some of which are included in the Bills in the Queen's Speech, and I look forward to men and women of good will from all parts of the House supporting those Bills.

**Nigel Dodds** (Belfast North) (DUP): May I warmly welcome the First Secretary of State's statement? This is a good agreement for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and it is a good agreement for all the people of Northern Ireland. All the money that has been outlined, particularly that for mental health and hard-to-reach areas, is for every section of the community in Northern Ireland. This is a deal that delivers for all the people of Northern Ireland.

We commit to transparency—we are very open to that. Some day, I like to think we might publish all the correspondence and conversations we had in 2010 with Labour Front Benchers, and in 2015 with Labour Front Benchers and indeed also the Scottish National party, because some of the faux outrage we have heard is hypocrisy of the highest order.

We look forward to working with the Government over the next five years to deliver a strengthened Union of the United Kingdom, to deliver Brexit, to deliver prosperity to all parts of the United Kingdom and, most of all, to protect and defend our country at home and abroad.

**Damian Green:** I, of course, welcome completely my right hon. Friend's words. He and I have spent more time together over the past few weeks than has been our wont in the past, and I assure him that it has been a life-enhancing experience at all times. I very much welcome the support of him and his colleagues so that we can, as he says, strengthen the Union and the economy in all parts of the country, get a Brexit deal that works for the whole country, and provide a confident Government for the next five years.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): May I welcome what my right hon. Friend has set out? The most important thing that he mentioned in his statement was getting the devolved institutions back up and running. If this deal, together with the money that was promised under the previous agreements, can help that, it is to be welcomed. That will strengthen the United Kingdom and the partnership of all the countries within it. I welcome what both he and the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) said.

**Damian Green:** My right hon. Friend is right. To repeat a hugely important point, the money will go to all parts of Northern Ireland. It will benefit all communities in Northern Ireland, and that should be a significant step towards ensuring that we have a successful conclusion to these vital talks about the re-setting up of a devolved Executive, which I am sure that everyone in this House wants to see.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Is the Minister concerned that his performance today is likely to bring crude hypocrisy into some disrepute? The Government have just lost an election. They made themselves and the country more unstable and weaker than they were before. In order again to correct problems within the Tory party, they are using this crude bribe. Is not the answer today that MPs who represent Wales and Scotland have to put our countries first, and is not the result of this that the Government are making the United Kingdom more divided than ever?

**Damian Green:** The problem with the hon. Gentleman's analysis is his starting point that our party lost the election. No, we did not; his party lost the election—it

[*Damian Green*]

lost its third election in a row. We all know that Labour won more seats than most of its own Members thought it would—there are people sitting on the Labour Benches who assumed that they would be out of a job now. In the spirit of non-partisanship, I welcome them back to this House but, nevertheless, the idea that the Labour party won the election is a fantasy that I think is dying out even on the wilder shores of Momentum.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): Given that the DUP's well known hard-nosed negotiators have generally done deals for about £1 billion when they need arrangements from the United Kingdom Government, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the fabulous value for money that he has obtained in a confidence and supply arrangement that will last five years and deliver Brexit? That compares rather well with the arrangement in 2008, when for about the same amount of money the then Government got one vote on 42-day detention—we were joined in the Lobby by the current Leader of the Opposition, shadow Chancellor, shadow Foreign Secretary and shadow Home Secretary—only for it to be reversed in the House of Lords three months later. This deal therefore looks like spectacularly good value for money for the United Kingdom.

**Damian Green:** I think that I thank my hon. Friend for that question. I am happy to agree with him that this is indeed a very good deal, not just for Northern Ireland but for the whole United Kingdom.

**Mr Ronnie Campbell** (Blyth Valley) (Lab): The Minister will be aware that the north-east of England is one of the poorest areas in the United Kingdom. We have not got a Barnett formula and the Government have only four or five MPs there—at least the last time I counted—so obviously we are going to get nowt, but is he giving our money away? Will we get what we are getting or are we going to get nowt?

**Damian Green:** If the hon. Gentleman wants to come and talk to us about a deal, I am sure that he, and indeed his constituents, would be very welcome. I can absolutely assure him that this does not involve diverting money from any of the various programmes that we use. Indeed, the UK prosperity fund will be able to help some parts of his area. He is more than welcome to keep an eye on that. As he knows, there are many city deals across England, and I am sure that the metro Mayor in Teesside will also do great things for that area. We are committed to all parts of the United Kingdom, including the part that the hon. Gentleman represents with such distinction.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): I do not think that the First Secretary of State mentioned defence in his statement, but will he confirm what I think I have read elsewhere: the Democratic Unionist party and the Conservative party have agreed that we will spend a minimum of 2% on defence?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend is right. I am sorry; I did not read out the entire agreement because you might have objected to that, Mr Speaker, but he is absolutely right. One of the things on which the DUP

and the Conservative party are completely united is making sure that we meet our NATO commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence. I hope my hon. Friend would also welcome the first sailing of the new aircraft carrier today, which shows that this party, and indeed the DUP, are very serious about defending our country.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): May I take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Speaker, for the fantastic family event on Saturday, when this Chamber was full of the sound of children and joy? You handled it with grace. I would encourage all Members to take a look at the coat of arms for our much loved Jo Cox and to enjoy the symbolism of mountains, the Thames, women's suffrage and, of course, the Yorkshire rose.

Global goal 5, which we agreed to, states that there has to be reproductive rights for all women. Will the deal with the DUP mean that we have stopped our progress towards that goal, losing our position as one of the global leaders fighting for equality for all?

**Damian Green:** May I first associate myself with the hon. Lady's very apposite remarks about the Jo Cox memorial? It was indeed very good to see it in this House on what was obviously a very sad anniversary.

In answer to the hon. Lady's question, this is, as I said to her hon. Friends, a matter to be decided in Northern Ireland by Northern Ireland politicians and the people of Northern Ireland, and that is where she should be making her arguments.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mr Andrew Bowie.

**Andrew C. Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government are committed to ensuring that everyone from every nation and region of our United Kingdom is able to share in the proceeds of continued economic growth? As has already been mentioned, one way of doing that has been through the successful city deals, and my constituency has benefited greatly from the Aberdeen city deal. What will the Government do to boost investment in Northern Ireland and spread the benefits of such mechanisms?

**Damian Green:** I welcome my hon. Friend to his place. He is completely right to point out the benefits of the investment that has been made in his constituency thanks to the Government's strong economic progress over the past seven years, which enables us to afford regeneration and investment that those who would run the economy down would not be able to afford. I am happy to assure my hon. Friend, and indeed the people of Northern Ireland, that that same strength of the economy can and will be used to regenerate communities all over the United Kingdom, including in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope that I pronounced correctly the surname of the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew C. Bowie). If I may be permitted, I hope even further that the hon. Gentleman is as devoted an admirer of the late and great David Bowie as I have been for the last 40 years.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Will the First Secretary of State confirm that, constitutionally, the extra money that he has announced today is for the Northern Ireland Assembly, not one particular party—great negotiators

though I know its members to be? Will he confirm that the money has been agreed, and that its priorities have been agreed, by all parties that may form the Executive on Thursday?

**Damian Green:** As I have said a number of times during these exchanges, absolutely. This is money for Northern Ireland—for the whole of Northern Ireland. It is not for one party in Northern Ireland and it is not for one community in Northern Ireland. It is for the whole of Northern Ireland, and it will benefit every community in Northern Ireland. As I said to the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry), I am quite surprised that Labour Members are not welcoming this extra money, particularly that for disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland. There was a time when the Labour party purported to care about disadvantaged communities.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that while much has been said in recent weeks about the importance of working with others across the aisle in the national interest, not everyone seems to like that in practice? Does he agree with the words of Ronald Reagan, I think, who said that someone you agree with 80% of the time is 80% friend and ally, not 20% enemy?

**Damian Green:** I confess that I had never heard that extremely good quotation before. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I will use it shamelessly.

My hon. Friend is quite right. Having sat for four years in a coalition Government with the Liberal Democrats, I am happy to admit that there will be times when one has very strong disagreements with people in another party but can still work alongside them in the interests of the country as a whole. That is a duty that we should all take on board.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP): I am sure the First Secretary agrees that it is a rather remarkable day when the Labour party criticises investment in schools, investment in roads, investment in housing and investment in jobs on the grounds that that threatens the peace process. It really is bonkers to suggest that that is the case. Perhaps some Labour Front Benchers might now want to reflect on their past equivocation when it came to supporting the IRA, and the message that that sends to young people today in Northern Ireland who might be thinking about taking up arms in the future.

**Damian Green:** I am happy to agree with my right hon. Friend. It is clear that anything that aids investment, particularly for disadvantaged communities, ought to help to produce a more positive political atmosphere in Northern Ireland. I am sure that Labour Front Benchers heard his other thoughts with interest.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): In welcoming this deal and the increased role of Northern Irish MPs in Westminster affairs, does the First Secretary agree that it is time to look again at the donations to the Northern Irish parties to ensure that they are consistent with the rules on the mainland, both in terms of transparency and of being sourced from outside the UK?

**Damian Green:** That is not part of the agreement, so it is not directly relevant to my statement today, but I am sure that the House will have heard my hon. Friend and will no doubt wish to discuss those matters further.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): The First Secretary of State said that the funding would go to a restored Northern Ireland Executive. If the Northern Ireland Executive are not restored, will the money still go there, or not until the Executive are restored?

**Damian Green:** At this stage, with three days to go before the deadline, the sensible thing for me to point out is that the Conservative party is completely committed to getting the Executive re-established, as is the Democratic Unionist party. We both believe that decisions about the funding of public services in Northern Ireland should be taken by politicians in Northern Ireland. That is the logic of the devolution settlement that we have with the other countries in the United Kingdom, and that is the position we want to get back to in Northern Ireland as well.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): Spreading infrastructure development, bringing stability to Government, delivering the Good Friday agreement and helping to implement a soft border with the Republic of Ireland are all good for Northern Ireland and for the United Kingdom. If none of that is welcome to the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) and his party, would my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government would be happy to receive back from the Scottish National party the moneys received for the Scottish city deals?

**Damian Green:** I rarely disagree with my hon. Friend, but I disagree with him on that point. I do not believe that the SNP speaks for Scotland on this matter. I am interested in the prosperity and future of the Scottish people, just as I am in the people of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. That is the logic of being a Unionist, and I will preserve that logic to the end.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Hospitals, schools and other public services in my constituency continue to face unprecedented cuts, so how do the Government justify finding £1.5 billion in order to achieve self-preservation? Is there any money on the magic money tree for the Dewsbury constituency?

**Damian Green:** As I have explained to the shadow First Secretary, this Government are committed to spending an extra £8 billion on the NHS in this Parliament, as well as an extra £4 billion on education and an extra £23 billion on infrastructure as a whole around the whole of the United Kingdom. I hope and expect that the people of Dewsbury will be able to benefit from that like everyone else.

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): Twenty per cent. more of my constituents voted Conservative in 2017 than did so at the previous opportunity. No one else will blow that trumpet, so I thought I should. Many of them did so because they were inspired by the vision for Brexit that was laid out by Theresa May. Can the First Secretary reassure me that this deal will strengthen Theresa May's hand when it comes to Brexit and ensure that we can deliver control of our borders and our laws, as was promised at the general election?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I think the hon. Gentleman was in election campaign mode for a moment there. I gently remind him that no hon. or right hon. Member should be named in this place—perhaps least of all the Prime Minister. It was to the Prime Minister that he was referring; no name is required.

**Damian Green:** First, I should praise the perspicacity of my hon. Friend's constituents for massively increasing his vote at the recent election. I am happy to assure him that this deal does indeed make it clear that the vision of a Brexit that works for all parts of this country is reinforced and strengthened by the agreement that we are discussing today.

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): The Prime Minister and the DUP pride themselves on being champions of this supposedly precious Union. While the Prime Minister is busy bribing the DUP to stitch up the seams of this threadbare Administration, she continues to neglect the people of Wales and treats us like third-class citizens in this so-called family of equals. My party has always been at pains to prove that the Barnett formula is not fit for purpose, and the Government's disregard for it today seems to indicate that they now agree. If this Government can hand out £1 billion to Northern Ireland in times of such austerity, I ask on the behalf of the people of Wales, "Where is the £1.7 billion which is now so evidently our right?"

**Damian Green:** I am happy to remind the hon. Lady that, under the new funding formula agreed last year, public spending in Wales is roughly £120 a head for every £100 a head spent in England, so the idea that this Government are in some way neglecting the people of Wales—my homeland—is wide of the mark. That figure arises from the Barnett formula and, on top of that, the two city deals involve funding of up to £540 million, which should release private sector investment totalling £4.7 billion. As the hon. Lady can see, the people of Wales are being well served by this Government.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): Be in no doubt that this deal has everything to do with the Conservative party and absolutely nothing to do with the country. If it had anything to do with the country, the First Secretary would come to the Dispatch Box and tell me how much money Scotland will get as a result of this deal being signed.

**Damian Green:** Since this deal is about Northern Ireland, Scotland will benefit in the way that it has in the past. I am quite happy to repeat the figures that I repeated to the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), the SNP spokesman, but I would not want to embarrass him further. Scotland is doing extremely well out of city deals and other things, and it benefits from the Barnett formula as well. Scotland's problem is that it has a Government in Holyrood that are not very good at running public services. The hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) and I probably ought to agree on that.

**Mr Shailesh Vara** (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): There has been much reference to the national interest this afternoon, and I commend my right hon. Friend for doing a deal with the DUP in the national interest.

However, given this crucial time in our history and the challenges that lie ahead, does he agree that now is the time for Labour to work constructively with the Government for the greater good of the nation, not to seek to score political points?

**Damian Green:** I agree with my hon. Friend's wise point. It is never too late to repent, and if the Opposition Front-Bench team want to adopt a more constructive attitude, I would very much welcome that.

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): Does the First Secretary view with utter despair the comments and implications from the Opposition Front-Bench team today that people will in effect go back to war because we intend to spend £1.5 billion on services that people so vitally need? A bit of rationale surely needs to be injected into this debate. This is a good deal for Northern Ireland and a good deal for the entire United Kingdom.

**Damian Green:** I agree that the extra £1 billion of new money in this deal, which will, as I have repeatedly said, be spent in the interests of developing the prosperity of all the people of Northern Ireland, is hugely welcome both in itself and in this crucial week for the devolution process. I am genuinely surprised that there is not a greater welcome for it among those on the Labour Benches.

**Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Does the First Secretary agree that it is perfectly sensible that there should be a consultation on VAT rates in tourism in Northern Ireland? Uniquely within the UK, it has a land border with another country that has a lower VAT rate on tourism—9%—and is therefore currently at a competitive disadvantage.

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. There are various things about Northern Ireland that make it unique within the United Kingdom. The history is one, and the land border is of course another. That is why it has a specific type of devolved government, which we hope to see restored, and why we will be consulting on various other policy areas as well.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I am a little surprised by the First Secretary's statement, because he left out the most important part of the agreement. He said that the DUP will support the Government on votes on the Queen's Speech, the Budget and so on, but he left out the only bit that the Government really care about, which is that the DUP will support them on all motions of no confidence. That is what the Government have bought with this money, isn't it? They have bought continuing support on all motions of no confidence, because the only way to bring down a Government under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 is a motion of no confidence. All the rest is irrelevant. Now that the DUP has effectively become a party of government, and not a party of opposition, surely, surely, surely it should surrender its right to Short money.

**Damian Green:** I am quite surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not recognise that the addition of large sums of money for promoting infrastructure, for helping people with mental health problems and for helping particularly disadvantaged communities is the most

important part of this agreement. It seems to me to be the most important part of the agreement because it will actually help disadvantaged people in Northern Ireland. If he does not accept that that is important, he will lose some of his socialist firebrand credentials, which he loves to parade.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): We were told by Ruth Davidson, no less, that the 13 Scottish Conservative MPs in this Parliament would operate as a separate bloc, would put Scotland's case forcefully and would make sure that they deliver for Scotland. Can the First Secretary tell us, with reference not to the last Parliament but to this Parliament, what additional targeted investments the 13 Scottish Tory MPs have secured for Scotland in return for supporting this deal?

**Damian Green:** I refer the hon. and learned Lady to what Ruth Davidson has said today. Ruth Davidson is completely in support of this agreement, and she makes the point that, just as Scotland benefits hugely from the strength of the economy that a Conservative Government have provided and that allows us to make all the investment in Scotland that I have already detailed—I am more than happy to detail it again, if the hon. and learned Lady wants—and just as we have treated Scotland fairly, we should treat Northern Ireland, Wales and other parts of England fairly, too. That is what this Government will continue to do. If she wants any new money, I refer her, as I have done repeatedly from this Dispatch Box today, to the UK prosperity fund that we will be introducing after Brexit, from which I hope many communities in Scotland, as well as in other parts of the UK, will benefit.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I recognise that abortion is a devolved matter, although I deplore the resulting legislative framework in Northern Ireland. Women are prosecuted and convicted in Northern Ireland for seeking to procure abortions, which forces them to come to England for terminations. This is the question we are trying to ask the First Secretary: will his Government fund those terminations, those procedures, in English hospitals because those Northern Ireland women—UK citizens—cannot get them in their own country?

**Damian Green:** If we accept the logic of devolution, as I have said in answer to previous questions along these lines, this is a matter to be resolved by politics in Northern Ireland.

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): As a Belfast Member of Parliament—like my right hon. Friend the Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast South (Emma Little Pengelly)—I commend the First Secretary of State for the content of the city deal commitment that forms part of this arrangement and for the huge opportunities for the city of Belfast and the wider region. Will he engage in organising meetings as soon as practicable so that we can get on and make sure that we get the best benefits of the city deal for our constituents in Belfast?

**Damian Green:** I am very pleased that, as the hon. Gentleman will know, talks have already started on the Belfast city deal, which I hope can be concluded as fast as possible so that Belfast can enjoy the benefits that

other cities, including Glasgow and Cardiff, already have. Apart from anything else, it would be a good symbol of the United Kingdom Government acting in the interests of all parts of the United Kingdom.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): The hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) mentioned an extra £1.5 billion for Northern Ireland, and under the Barnett formula that should mean an extra £2.5 billion for Wales. Does the First Secretary of State agree that if the Welsh Secretary refuses to find that money for Wales around the Cabinet table, once again the Tories will have betrayed the people of Wales?

**Damian Green:** The new money of £1 billion in this deal is of course outside the Barnett formula. As I explained to the hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts), under the Barnett formula every person in Wales receives approximately £120 for every £100 of public spending for every person in England. It is clear from the figures that Wales is not doing badly out of this formula.

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): During seven years of austerity, which left north-east working families on average £1,000 worse off per year, Tory Governments refused to invest in smart growth for good jobs, but now they have found £1.5 billion to bung at the DUP. Does the First Secretary therefore acknowledge that unless he immediately invests an equivalent amount in the north-east, and undertakes an air passenger duty review, the Government's reputation for economic competence will be on a level with their reputation for Brexit negotiations, where they are the laughing stock of Europe?

**Damian Green:** I point out to the hon. lady that over that period—indeed, over her period in the House—unemployment has consistently fallen in her area, as in other areas, until it has now reached its lowest level since the mid-1970s. I would have thought she would welcome that; more of her constituents are in work than ever before.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Why do this Government not do the right thing and deal with these women who have no option but to travel from Northern Ireland to seek termination services in England, Scotland and Wales? Why do the Government, of whom the First Secretary is a leading member, not do the right thing and say that those women should not be charged for accessing NHS services, which, as taxpayers, they contribute to through the tax they pay on their wages?

**Damian Green:** The hon. Lady knows that the NHS is a devolved function in the devolved Administrations, so if we accept the logic of devolution, this is clearly a political issue for the people of Northern Ireland.

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): The House is disappointed this afternoon that the First Secretary of State has been so vague in explaining exactly where the money to pay for this deal is coming from. It is therefore incumbent on him to ask his Chancellor to come to this House to explain how it is that the period of austerity which we have suffered for

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so long has so abruptly come to an end and how it is that if we now have the “proceeds of growth”, areas such as Yorkshire, the north-west, Newcastle and Cumbria are not also allowed to enjoy them?

**Damian Green:** All the areas that the hon. Lady talks about have benefited from an economic policy that has reduced unemployment to its lowest level for more than 40 years. I am happy to assure her that the money in this deal is well within the confines of the fiscal targets we have set ourselves, so we are still able to hit those targets of eliminating the deficit by 2025—by the middle of the next decade—and reducing the structural deficit to no more than 2% by 2020-21. This does not affect our fiscal targets at all.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): Speaking as the new Member for Stirling, where there is a new city region deal in the offing, may I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm for the benefit of Opposition Members that all city deals in Scotland and Wales since 2014 have sat outside the Barnett formula?

**Damian Green:** I welcome another of my hon. Friends to his place. He is exactly right. The city deals and the city region deals have proved one of the most successful innovations of this Government. I look forward to the people of his constituency benefiting from them, as people in constituencies across the UK already have.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The Secretary of State for Scotland is not in his place—no doubt he is off somewhere polishing his brass neck—so I will have to tell the First Secretary of State that the city deals arranged in Scotland have come at a cost to local government and the Scottish Government. The UK Government are paying only £678 million, whereas the Scottish Government and local government in Scotland have put in £1.3 billion. How much are local authorities in Belfast and in Northern Ireland as a whole expected to put into the city deals?

**Damian Green:** Only an SNP Member could idly talk about “only” £678 million; soon we will be talking about real money. [Interruption.] It is a Geoffrey Howe quote. The UK Government and the Scottish Government have joint responsibilities to help the economy of Scotland, and certainly the UK Government are already demonstrably meeting those commitments. I hope the SNP-led Scottish Government continue to do so.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): I welcome this agreement, but does the First Secretary of State agree that the injustice—because that is what it is—of women from Northern Ireland who seek terminations being charged to have them on the mainland by the NHS is nothing at all to do with this agreement? It is an entirely separate matter. To that end, does he agree that the Government should consider this matter, because it is not fair that women from Northern Ireland seeking terminations should be charged by the NHS here in this country?

**Damian Green:** I can only say to my right hon. Friend what I have said to Opposition Members, which is that this is clearly an enormously sensitive political topic, and the best place for it to be resolved is within the democratic politics of Northern Ireland itself.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Tonight, many of my constituents in Glasgow East will be wondering why our local jobcentres are being shut when the pavements of Northern Ireland are being made of gold. Was the Secretary of State for Scotland consulted as part of this grubby deal and the finances involved in it, or was the Cabinet’s man in Scotland once again frozen out?

**Damian Green:** Like all Cabinet members, the Secretary of State for Scotland plays a key role in all decisions made by the Government. The hon. Gentleman’s characterisation of this deal is, as I hope I have shown over the past hour or so, completely wide of the mark.

## Grenfell Tower Fire/Fire Safety

5.12 pm

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I will update the House on the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and our safety inspections of cladding in other buildings.

I know that I speak for the whole House when I express my heartfelt grief at the Grenfell Tower catastrophe. Almost a fortnight has passed, but the shock has not subsided. I have visited Kensington and witnessed the terrible anguish of those who have lost so much. In some cases, people have lost literally everything. I am sure that, like me, many hon. Members have returned from their constituencies today with the anger and the fears of residents still ringing in their ears. It is anger that a tragedy on this scale was ever allowed to happen in 21st century Britain, and fear that it could happen again. It is this fear that I want to address first.

I know that the entire country is anxious to hear what we are doing to reassure residents about fire safety in similar blocks around the country. My Department has contacted all councils and housing associations in England to identify all tall residential buildings with potentially similar cladding that they are responsible for. We estimate that number to be around 600. On 18 June, we wrote to those councils and housing associations and asked them to start sending samples. On 21 June, our combustibility testing programme for aluminium composite material started. It is run by the Building Research Establishment—BRE. On 22 June, the Government provided advice to all these landlords about interim safety measures where a building has ACM cladding that is unlikely to be compliant with building regulations. This advice was recommended by an independent panel of experts and includes advice based on the emerging findings from the Metropolitan police investigation into Grenfell Tower.

I can inform the House that, as of midday today, the cladding from 75 high-rise buildings in 26 local authority areas has failed the combustibility test. Members will rightly want to know whether their residents are affected, and my Department will publish regular updates on gov.uk.

The combustibility test has three categories rated 1 to 3, and it is judged that cladding material in category 2 or 3 does not meet the requirements on limited combustibility within building regulations. I can also confirm to the House that, so far, on that basis, all samples of cladding tested have failed. The fact that all samples so far have failed underlines the value of the testing programme and the vital importance of submitting samples urgently.

The testing facility can analyse 100 samples a day and runs around the clock. I am concerned about the speed at which samples are being submitted. I urge all landlords to submit their samples immediately. Landlords and local fire and rescue services are alerted to every failed test, and we are supporting and monitoring all follow-up action, including by dedicated caseworkers in my Department.

Landlords for all affected buildings have informed, or are informing, tenants and are implementing the interim safety measures needed, working with fire and rescue services. At this time, the safety of people living in these

buildings is our paramount concern. I am determined that residents have as much peace of mind as possible in such worrying times. Landlords must keep residential buildings safe for their tenants. Where they cannot satisfy that obligation with appropriate mitigating measures, we expect alternative accommodation to be provided while the remedial work is carried out. That is exactly what happened in Camden, and I pay tribute to the residents for their brave response to such a distressing situation.

It is obvious that the problem of unsafe cladding may not be unique to social housing or residential buildings. We have asked other owners, landlords and managers of private sector residential blocks to consider their own buildings, and we have made the testing facility freely available to them. My Department is also working with the Government Property Unit to oversee the checks on wider public sector buildings. Hospitals are well prepared. Each one has a tailored fire safety plan, but nothing is more important than the safety of patients and staff, so, on a precautionary basis, we have asked all hospitals to conduct additional checks.

The Government will continue to work closely with fire and rescue colleagues to prioritise and conduct checks based on local circumstances. The Education and Skills Funding Agency is contacting all bodies responsible for safety in schools, instructing them to carry out immediate checks to identify any buildings that require further investigation. We will have more information this week.

Across the wider Government estate, 15 buildings have been identified as requiring further investigation. While that work continues, it is vital that we offer every assistance to the victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. As of this morning, 79 people have been confirmed dead or listed as missing, presumed dead. Sadly, it is believed that this number will increase.

As the Prime Minister told the House last week, the initial response of the emergency services was exemplary, but the immediate support on the ground was simply not good enough. A remarkable community effort sprang up overnight while official support was found wanting. That failure was inexcusable, and it is right that a new team and approach is now in operation. We have activated the Bellwin scheme and sent significant central Government resource, including a single point of access into Government provided by the Grenfell Tower victims unit, operating from my Department. Staff from six Departments are offering support at the Westway assistance centre and a family bereavement centre in Holborn.

The Government have also set aside £5 million for the Grenfell Tower residents discretionary fund, with more than £1 million already distributed. Each household affected is receiving £5,500 to provide some immediate assistance, and so far 111 households have received payments. The British Red Cross is operating an advice line for anyone affected or in need of support. It is just one of many charities, faith organisations and businesses that have provided invaluable assistance to victims. I can announce to the House today that the Government will contribute £1 million to support their efforts. That money will be new money. It will be distributed to a local consortium of charities, trusts and foundations that are working together to respond to this tragic event.

[Sajid Javid]

Our other priority has been to find survivors a safe and secure place to live. The Prime Minister made a clear commitment that a good-quality temporary home would be offered within three weeks to every family whose home was destroyed in the fire. Every one of those families will also be offered a permanent social home in the local area. That work is under way and the first families moved into their homes over the weekend. Last week I also announced that the Government had secured 68 homes in a new development in Kensington to rehouse local residents. We will do everything we can to support the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, now and in the future, and I will regularly update the House on our progress.

As the Prime Minister said in her statement to the House last week, the disaster at Grenfell Tower should never have happened. There is an ongoing police investigation and there will be an independent, judge-led public inquiry to get to the truth of what happened and who was responsible. Building regulations and the system for ensuring fire safety in buildings have been developed over many decades. Until the Grenfell Tower fire, many experts would have claimed that that system had served us well. But now we have witnessed a catastrophic failure, on a scale that many thought impossible in 21st century Britain. It is clear that that failure must be understood and rectified without delay, and the Government are determined to ensure that happens. As an initial step, I can inform the House today that I am establishing an independent expert advisory panel to advise the Government on any steps that should immediately be taken on fire safety. Further details about the panel, including its members, will be released shortly.

This tragedy must never be forgotten. It should weigh heavily on the consciousness of every person tasked with making decisions that ensure that it can never, ever happen again.

5.21 pm

**John Healey** (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for the advance copy of his statement, and for what he has told the House. As he has said, the shock from this truly terrible, tragic fire at Grenfell Tower has not subsided, and neither has the fear. As the Prime Minister said in her statement last week, the Government's response, both national and local, was not good enough in the early days. Nationally, it is still not good enough. Hundreds of residents of Grenfell Tower and their relatives are still struggling to keep their lives going in the face of this gravest loss, and hundreds of thousands of residents in 4,000 other tower blocks across the country are still wondering whether their homes are safe, worried about sleeping at night and want to know what the Government are doing to ensure their safety.

Trust is so low in the local community around Grenfell Tower that I welcome the local Gold Command leadership. I welcome the key workers who are in place to provide each household with support and advice, and I welcome the £1 million paid so far in immediate assistance payments. However, the Secretary of State has made a promise to rehouse all Grenfell Tower residents in the local area within three weeks. It is now nearly a fortnight since the fire. How many people are covered by that

pledge? Two weeks on, is it correct that 370 households are still in emergency accommodation? How many have so far been found permanent new homes, or even the "good-quality temporary" homes mentioned by the Secretary of State? By what date will all residents affected by the fire be in a permanent new home? Finally, as those residents move, will the Government guarantee that the children will still be eligible to attend their same schools?

More widely, Ministers talk too loosely about the buildings that have been tested so far. The Prime Minister said last week:

"We can test more than 100 buildings a day".—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 169.]

Will the Secretary of State make it clear to the House that the Government's "testing" is only of cladding samples sent in by councils and housing associations? The Government say that more than 600 tower blocks with cladding need safety checks, so why, five days into the programme, have only 75 tests been done so far? Why have all failed? Importantly, will he confirm that cladding is just not the whole story? We know this from both coroners' reports in 2013, into the Lakanal House and Shirley Towers fires. We may well find that from investigations into Grenfell Tower, as the fire there broke into almost every floor of the building.

We need from Ministers a much more thorough review of fire safety in all the country's residential tower blocks, a total commitment to action to deal with any problems, and a guarantee that the Government will help to fund the costs. That also applies to other public buildings such as schools and hospitals, over which similar doubts may hang.

The issue of costs is crucial because some significant work and alterations have to be done, and quickly. Will the Secretary of State make funding available up front—not after the event through the Bellwin scheme—for any council or housing association that needs it for recladding or the installation of sprinklers and other fire prevention measures, starting with the highest-risk high-rise blocks and those with sheltered accommodation? Will he lift the central cap that he currently places on local authorities' housing so that they can borrow and invest to ensure that their residents are safe?

I welcome the independent expert advisory panel, but frankly the Secretary of State is wrong to say that many experts would claim that our buildings regulation and fire safety system serves us well. Many experts have said exactly the opposite, especially since the two coroners' reports four years ago into previous tower block fires. Will he now act on the recommendations in those reports?

There really should be a triple fire safety lock around buildings and works on them. First, the materials must be fit for purpose and meet safety specifications. Secondly, fire safety systems must be in place and fire risk assessments done regularly. Thirdly, building regulation and control must make sure that design, construction and any further works are fully safe. Instead, the update that the Secretary of State has given us this afternoon suggests a collapse of the fire safety control and check system. It is not working and it must change.

Finally, what is the Secretary of State doing to make sure that when the Prime Minister said that we simply had not given enough attention to social housing in this

country, those were not merely empty words? What is he doing to make sure that this terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower means a profound change of course on housing in this country?

**Sajid Javid:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments—in particular, his support for Gold Command and the relief effort on the ground in Kensington.

The right hon. Gentleman asked a number of specific questions. I can give him some updated numbers on rehousing the victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The commitment that we have rightly made is that every single one of the families whose homes have been destroyed—both at Grenfell Tower and in the neighbouring Grenfell Walk: together, some 144 units—are guaranteed an offer within three weeks of temporary housing in the local neighbourhood; we have defined “the local neighbourhood” as Kensington and Chelsea, but also the neighbouring boroughs.

So far, some 373 hotel rooms are being occupied; that represents 153 households from Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk and 220 households from the cordon area. Individual housing assessments have been done for almost all those from Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk; the work is led by Westminster City Council, with support from a number of other councils across London. If any have not been done, that has been through choice: people have asked that their assessment be delayed because they are not ready. We are, of course, respecting their wishes. In respect of those whose assessments have been done, there have already been 59 offers of temporary accommodation.

As I am sure hon. Members will understand, we are finding that some families want to take their time to make a decision on the temporary accommodation. In a number of instances, some of the families have quite understandably first asked for something in Kensington as close as possible to where they lived, but when they have been shown the home and seen what is left of the tower they have understandably changed their minds and asked for some other options. We are working with them at their pace. Our commitment is that they will all be made offers within the three weeks, although they will not all necessarily be in the temporary accommodation within that time. We have to respect their choice when they are made offers. If they change their minds, we want to accommodate that.

The other issue is that some families actually doubted us when we said that the initial accommodation is temporary. One family I met in the Westway Centre on Friday said, perfectly understandably, “How do we know temporary is temporary? How do we know that you’re not just going to leave us there and not find us better quality, more suitable and permanent accommodation?” When I probed a bit further, the family said they were told that Grenfell Tower would be temporary accommodation when they first moved in, but they were still there 17 years later, so I absolutely understand their concerns. In that case, I had to make a personal commitment to that family. That worked; they are now in temporary accommodation. We want to work with each family at their pace to get them what they deserve and need as best we can.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the testing facilities. I can confirm that the testing facility operated by the Building Research Establishment is testing the

cladding material only. That is so important because, besides the whole building structure, the material itself has to meet minimum combustibility standards. The test tries to achieve that. So far, 75 tests on samples have taken place and all 75 have failed.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman’s statement that cladding is not the whole story, as it goes much further than that. One example is what has happened in Camden. The result of the cladding test for Camden triggered further investigations by the local fire service and the London fire commissioners. When the commissioners went into those tower blocks in Camden, they found, in their own words, multiple fire safety inspection failures, which, frankly, should not have happened in tower blocks of any type, and certainly not in those tower blocks in Camden. There were problems with gas pipe insulation, some stairways were not accessible and there were breaches of internal walls. Most astonishingly, literally hundreds of fire doors were missing. Camden Council itself estimates that it needs at least 1,000 fire doors because they were missing from those five blocks. That has nothing to do with the cladding. Something has clearly gone drastically wrong there. These issues need to be looked at very carefully to find out why this is happening in this day and age in our country.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about costs. We have been very clear that local authorities and housing associations must not hesitate at all. As soon as they learn about any action and necessary steps that they need to take to ensure public safety in terms of fire risk, they must take that action. If they are not able to pay for that themselves, we will of course work with them and put a financial support package in place with the individual organisation.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about what more we can do now. I am sure that he understands that we can do some things now in this immediate and urgent situation, but that there are also longer-term lessons to learn. Some will come from the public inquiry, but we cannot wait for the final results of that inquiry. Hopefully—it is up to the judge—there will be an interim report, but work can be done much sooner than that. That is one reason that I am putting the independent expert panel in place, and I would be very happy for the right hon. Gentleman to meet and have access to that panel.

The right hon. Gentleman’s final point was about social housing. I absolutely agree that there are very big lessons to learn about the quantity and quality of social housing. There has been massive investment of record amounts in social housing over the past six years. More than 330,000 new units have been created, and more council housing has been built in the past six years than in the 13 years before that. We can do a lot more, but it is much better if we work together.

**Mr Speaker:** There will be no more tragic matter treated of in this House in this Parliament than that which is before us now, in consequence of which I want every Member who wishes to contribute to the exchanges to have the opportunity to do so. It might, however, help the House if I point out that there are a would-be 52 contributors in the debate to come. As a result, there is a premium upon brevity from Back and Front Benches alike, now to be brilliantly exemplified by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith).

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend for the action he is taking, the urgency with which he is seeing this process through and the way he wants to drive it through, but to return to the points raised by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, there is one issue we need to revisit in parallel and to get on with as fast as we can. My main concern is that, as we look at the cladding and all the other issues, such as the windows in these tower blocks, which can explode into flames if they are made of the wrong type of glass—that is often overlooked among the other things, such as the fire doors—we should really ask ourselves the simple question, and have a real review into, whether it is necessary any longer in many cases to have these older tower blocks, and whether we would not be better off taking a very strong decision to bring some of these tower blocks down and to provide much better, much more family-friendly low-rise, or even council house, accommodation. Will my right hon. Friend comment on that?

**Sajid Javid:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his remarks—he makes a very good point. Our most urgent work right now is to make existing tower blocks safe, but there are also longer term consequences, and that includes looking at our whole approach to social housing and the quality of social housing.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sympathies and those of the SNP to those who have been affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy and those who face worry as they wonder about their accommodation tonight. I am glad to see the proposal to give funds to local charities, which is very welcome, but I would like to ask a few more questions on the statement.

First, will there be funding from central Government for mitigating measures and alternative accommodation where local authorities face expensive remedial work? That work may take a significant time, and residents will need to be housed and perhaps compensated during that period. Will there also be additional funding for the fire service, which was clearly not able to carry out fire safety work on, for example, the blocks the Secretary of State mentioned in Camden?

Will the tenancy agreements for those moved into temporary and more permanent accommodation be equivalent to, or better than, the tenancy agreements they had in Grenfell Tower?

It was clear—the Minister's response acknowledged this—that the official response was not good enough, although I make these points in the spirit of helpfulness and not in any way on a party political basis. In Scotland and in Glasgow, we have a well-developed resilience strategy involving all local authority bodies. Will the Secretary of State look at the way it is implemented at local government level? Will he also look at how building regulations in Scotland compare with building regulations in England?

Is it possible to have Scottish representatives on the advisory panel the Secretary of State mentioned, so that they can share some of that experience and that different approach? Lastly, the Scottish Government have already established a short-term ministerial working group on building in fire safety. Will there be a means for it to report to the inquiry?

**Sajid Javid:** I thank the hon. Lady for all her important points and questions. On funding, we have made it clear that all the local authorities and housing associations absolutely must do all the necessary work, and we will work with each of them to make sure they have the funding they need if funding is preventing them from doing that work.

On the tenancy agreements for the Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk residents, the terms will be the same or better, whatever housing they eventually receive—whether it is temporary or permanent.

On Scotland, the hon. Lady made a good point. Scotland has already identified around 500 high-rise buildings with cladding, but none of them has ACM cladding. Scottish building regulations certainly deserve a closer look, and as we do a wider review, we should certainly take that into account.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): The most worrying thing in the Secretary of State's statement was when he said that none of the examples of cladding so far had met the requirements in the building regulations but had clearly been fitted to buildings. May I urge him to make that the first thing he asks his independent expert advisory panel to look at? If we have widespread non-compliance with existing building regulations, that is the most urgent thing we need to deal with to prevent a recurrence of this tragedy elsewhere in the country.

**Sajid Javid:** I very much agree with my right hon. Friend. That is a very urgent question that is already being looked at. Once we have the independent panel established, which will be from tomorrow morning, that is one of the first things it will be tasked with.

**Emma Dent Coad** (Kensington) (Lab): I have heard some very ill-informed comments about tower blocks here. As the only architecture expert in the House, as far as I know, I am happy to give a lecture about the safety of well-maintained tower blocks. Concrete-framed tower blocks are safer than Victorian terraces, for example. But that is for another day.

I have heard this morning, shockingly, that people who have concerns about their immigration status or lack of documentation are still not coming forward, and are sleeping rough, and some have been told that they may not be eligible for housing and medical services, and may be reported to the Home Office. Will the Secretary of State please make a firm commitment now, and communicate it widely, that immigration status will not be a barrier to help from medical and housing services, and nor will they be reported to the Home Office, so that traumatised and frightened people have no fear in coming forward?

**Sajid Javid:** First, I thank the hon. Lady for the reassurance that she has been providing to her constituents, many of whom are looking for support from across Government and elsewhere. She has been a very reassuring figure locally, and I thank her for that.

On her particular question on immigration, I can absolutely give her that assurance. We have already made it clear that any information that anyone coming forward provides either to Government or local government will not be used for any kind of immigration check. That has been put in a letter that has been given to every

affected family. If the hon. Lady has some further suggestions about how we can get that message out, as I think we should follow up on those, I would be very happy to listen.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): I welcome the rapid pace of testing of the cladding. It is shocking to hear that so many tower blocks are unsafe. We have heard about the situation in Camden, where tower blocks are being evacuated. Does my right hon. Friend expect other councils to manage evacuations of tower blocks?

**Sajid Javid:** Thankfully, no other councils have come forward so far with a need to have an evacuation. There are many more tests to take place, so I do not want to prejudge them, but hopefully what has happened in Camden will be a rare occurrence. As I said earlier, in the case of Camden, in particular, the cladding was a trigger for further fire safety inspections, but it was the massive failure of those further fire safety inspections that caused the evacuation.

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for rightly commending the bravery of the 3,000 residents who were evacuated from their homes in my constituency on Friday. In the past few days, residents have repeatedly brought up the closure of Belsize fire station, which was 500 metres away from the tower block in question. Will the Secretary of State give his support to reopening Belsize fire station, which was closed by the former Mayor of London in 2014, so that my residents can feel safe in their homes again?

**Sajid Javid:** Of course, local fire and rescue services must have the resources that they need, but in the assessment that was done with Camden in recent days, there is nothing to suggest that that was the issue that might have led to an evacuation. As the hon. Lady is rightly concerned about her constituents, I am sure that she will be hugely concerned with what has come out of the fire inspection report on the towers in Camden, particularly the issue around the fire doors. I am focusing my efforts right now on making sure that Camden can get all that remedial work done, with significant help from Government to ensure that those fire doors are in place as soon as possible.

**Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Regrettably, it would appear that unsafe cladding is widespread. It exists where there are Labour councils, Conservative councils, and councils of other colours; it was put up during Labour Administrations and Conservative Administrations. Does the Secretary of State share my concern and regret, therefore, to hear some party politicisation of this tragedy, and hope that we can all work together across parties to make sure that it never happens again?

**Sajid Javid:** I agree very much with my hon. Friend. As I said in my statement, clearly some things have gone drastically and catastrophically wrong. It has happened over a number of decades. If we are going to put that right, we can do it if we all work together.

**Mr Geoffrey Robinson** (Coventry North West) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State inform us whether any samples of cladding have been received from Coventry for evaluation? Has he taken up with the Chancellor of

the Exchequer the question of making money available from the central Treasury contingency fund, which is usually very large and was established precisely for this sort of disaster?

**Sajid Javid:** I will first attend to the question about Coventry. As I have said, 26 local authority areas have done tests that are public, but not all of them have told the residents of their respective towers. Coventry is not on the list of those that have gone public. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that, if Coventry were one of those, it would contact its local MPs individually. On funding, local authorities also have reserves for unforeseen circumstances. Some local authorities will certainly want to use their reserves.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): May I commend my right hon. Friend for his extensive statement to the House? All our thoughts must still be with those affected by these dreadful events. I welcome the systemic testing of cladding material. What would be the legal ramifications if landlords failed to make use of that service or, indeed, to ensure that their property is safe? Secondly, does my right hon. Friend agree that local authorities should review the use of high-rise accommodation for disabled and very elderly people?

**Sajid Javid:** Let me start by addressing my right hon. Friend's final point about disabled and very elderly people. Of course, special circumstances will be required in situations such as evacuation in case of fire. That should certainly be taken into account by local fire services looking at those buildings and carrying out a further inspection. On the legal ramifications, if a landlord does not submit something for testing when there is good reason to do so, it is the legal responsibility of every landlord in the country, whether the property is social or private, to make sure that it is safe in every way for tenants, and there will certainly be action.

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): Although I welcome the announcement about an independent expert advisory panel, the Government have historically had the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. It has not met for five years, but it sounds as though the independent advisory panel will do the same job. What is the difference between the two?

**Sajid Javid:** First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for the work he has done over a number of years to promote fire safety. He has secured this evening's Adjournment debate, to which my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, will respond. I am sure that will enable the hon. Gentleman to further explore his question and others. In the light of the tragedy, this particular panel will possibly have a broader remit, and its membership might also be broader, including through taking on international experience.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The horror of Grenfell Tower will remain with victims and their families and friends for generations. Will my right hon. Friend expand on the role of the victims unit, in particular the work it is doing with children who have lost a parent and those adults who have lost the English-speaking member of their family?

**Sajid Javid:** The victims unit, which is now based in my Department, has a number of officials from at least six Departments. The idea is that if any victim, family member or friend has any issue that central Government can help with—it might relate to immigration, tax and benefits or housing—they would have to deal with only one individual, making it much easier for them.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I am grateful for the statement and share the Secretary of State's grief, anxiety and shock at the Grenfell Tower catastrophe. When tower blocks fail fire safety tests, and when urgent mitigating measures cannot be done to make those buildings safe, what he has said to date does not reassure many Members, because local authorities and housing associations will need funding support to help them provide new housing for those residents affected. What consideration has been given to declaring this a civil emergency, so that central Government funds can be provided to housing associations and local authorities trying to rehouse local residents?

**Sajid Javid:** I reassure the right hon. Gentleman that funding is already being provided by central Government in certain circumstances. We have made it clear that if there is an issue and the remedial work to make a property safe cannot be done immediately, as was the case in Camden, the local authority should not hesitate but should take action immediately, regardless of cost, to make residents safe. When the local authority needs funding support, we will work with it and provide that support.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his full and detailed statement. I am sure that all Members on both sides of the House are united in their determination that the horrific events at Grenfell will never happen again. I am enormously encouraged by the announcement that there will be a full public inquiry. Will the Secretary of State give a commitment that that inquiry will not be allowed to drag and that it will happen as soon as possible? We need answers, and quickly.

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend refers to the public inquiry that was announced by the Prime Minister last week. It will be a judge-led fully independent inquiry. We should not prejudice the terms of the inquiry because they will be set by the judge. The issue of timing is important, but it is also important to ensure that the victims are properly represented, as the Prime Minister has promised that they will be.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Secretary of State referred to cladding but not to insulation. He will know that the police and the fire service have raised serious concerns about the way in which the insulation spread the fire at Grenfell Tower. What is being done about insulation? Is it now time to require that insulation materials are tested as well? Will there be transparency about what insulation materials were used in Grenfell Tower, and should those materials be banned in tower blocks and other properties?

**Sajid Javid:** The right hon. Lady is right to raise that issue, and the police report on Grenfell Tower rightly focuses on it. I will not say anything more about Grenfell

Tower, as it is important that I do not get involved in that, but, more broadly, it is possible that a test could show that cladding was category 1, which is the correct type, but that the insulation was the wrong type. Since the police report, we have worked with the Local Government Association to update the advice that is going to local councils. We are looking at what is the best way to respond and to ensure that insulation is also looked at properly.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment that this tragedy has been politicised so heavily by senior members of the Labour party? How long does he think the public inquiry will take to come to conclusions? Is there any evidence that the panelling has been used in countries other than ours?

**Sajid Javid:** What the public want to see—this is what they are seeing today in this Chamber—is everyone working together. The timing of the public inquiry will be up to the judge, but it is hoped that the judge might see fit to produce an interim report that we can act on much more quickly.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I want to press the Secretary of State a little further on funding for local authorities. Most of them do not have vast reserves but are struggling with 40% funding cuts. There is still not sufficient clarity on exactly where and when the Government will step forward with funding. It is needed not only for places that need sprinklers and to get rid of cladding but, crucially, for rehousing. Will he say exactly what the national Government will fund?

**Sajid Javid:** I can only repeat what I said earlier: whether it is removing cladding, taking other necessary action to improve the fire safety of buildings or rehousing, local authorities should get on with it, just like in Camden. The first thought there was not, "How exactly are we going to fund this?" The council rightly got on with action and made the tenants safe. The Government will then work with those local authorities that cannot afford that to provide necessary support.

**Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): As someone who previously worked for Shelter, may I thank that organisation and all the other charitable organisations that are working so hard in the constituency to do what they can for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire? What is the Government's timeline to rehouse all the displaced Grenfell survivors from temporary accommodation into long-term, stable homes in their local community?

**Mr Speaker:** We welcome the hon. Lady to the House and look forward to her bringing the benefit of her experience in that and other sectors to our deliberations.

**Sajid Javid:** On the timeline, the offer of temporary accommodation will be made within three weeks. On permanent accommodation, we have already found a number of units. Some people are starting to look at them, and my expectation is that we can hopefully do that within months and move very quickly, as long as that is what the tenants want. I, too, welcome the hon. Lady's experience at Shelter. She may be aware that Shelter is giving tremendous help on the ground in

Kensington to a lot of the tenants who have concerns over whether temporary really means temporary, and I hugely welcome that.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): On funding, basically the Secretary of State has said that the Government will work with local authorities and housing associations to provide funding if they cannot afford to carry out the work. Will he explain precisely what that means and what criteria he will use? Is it not fundamentally wrong to expect other social housing tenants to pay for this work through either increased rents or less maintenance of their properties? Will the Government bring forward a comprehensive finance package that provides not merely increased borrowing for organisations, but the actual cash to pay for this work?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman will know that, as we speak, it is a legal requirement for local authorities and housing associations that they ensure that the homes they offer to tenants are fit for habitation. They should be meeting those requirements already. I gave the example of Camden; it should already have been meeting those requirements. Despite that, if authorities and associations are not able to do that from their current resources, they should get on with the job and meet those requirements, and we will work with them and give them the support they need.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): It is good to be back, Mr Speaker.

Ann Jones, the Assembly Member for the Vale of Clwyd, has brought forward her own legislation to introduce sprinklers in all new-build houses in Wales. I am a firm believer in the dictum that out of badness comes good. What happened at Grenfell Tower was bad—it was a tragedy. Can we use this disaster to open a complete review of fire safety across the UK, not just on the issue of cladding, but on insulation, containment, emergency lighting and especially sprinkler systems, and for not just high towers but other vulnerable housing, such as houses of multiple occupation?

**Sajid Javid:** As I said in my statement, there will certainly be a need for a complete review across the UK.

**Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): Approximately one in three properties in Westminster towers is leasehold and I am sure the same is true for other blocks. Does the Secretary of State have the power to require leaseholders to install fire doors and other internal fire safety measures? If not, what is he going to do about it and who is going to pay?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady raises a very important point. This is often the case, although not exclusively. Many leaseholders have removed fire doors, which is clearly not acceptable. I believe that all the legal powers are in place. Certainly, one of the lessons of this tragedy—this is certainly what we have seen in Camden—is to make sure we take a much greater interest in enforcement.

**Chris Williamson** (Derby North) (Lab): The Secretary of State said in his statement, “Landlords must keep residential buildings safe for their tenants.” The experts all agree that sprinklers save lives. Sympathetic words

are simply not good enough. Fitting sprinklers would cost far less than the deal the Government have stitched together with the DUP. Let us have no more excuses. What is more important to the Secretary of State: clinging to power or preventing fire deaths?

**Sajid Javid:** When the local fire and rescue service recommends sprinklers, they should be installed.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): Was the Secretary of State’s Department aware of the fire at the Lacrosse tower in Melbourne in 2014? It had cladding similar to that at Grenfell Tower. What lessons did the Department for Communities and Local Government learn from that fire? Should it not have prompted a review of the cladding of tower blocks in this country?

**Sajid Javid:** The important point that the hon. Gentleman highlights is that we can benefit from international experience, whether that comes from Australia, Europe or elsewhere. That is certainly one thing we should look at as we learn the lessons.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): The Secretary of State will be familiar with tower blocks in my constituency. I would like him to explain now why he will not simply use this opportunity to pay for the sprinkler systems that were recommended by the coroner after the Lakeland House fire.

**Sajid Javid:** It is important that we are clear on this. The coroner did not say in her 2013 report that all high-rise buildings should have sprinklers; she said that they should be considered where they are appropriate.

**Jess Phillips** (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I want to follow on from the point made about immigration status by my very welcome hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad). Having worked with people with a very fragile immigration status who have suffered a trauma, I know that until people have a stable immigration status, they will never feel safe to speak out. The Secretary of State asks what we can do. We could give those people a message today that we will fast-track them for indefinite leave to remain, with access to public funds, so that they can go through the inquiry without fear or favour. Will he agree to that?

**Sajid Javid:** It is a very important point. I think we can show appropriate sensitivity to victims who feel that they have challenges with their immigration status and treat them more favourably.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Public inquiries are slow, lumbering instruments of change, as we found with the Chilcot report and the Savile inquiry, which took nearly a decade. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that we will not wait until we have inquiry reports for remedies, but that as soon as remedies are obvious and required, we will act instantly, because the danger is so high and the anxieties are so widespread?

**Sajid Javid:** I absolutely agree.

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The Secretary of State is right that profound lessons need to be learned from this tragedy, such as why fire service

[Jack Dromey]

checks on high-rise blocks have been cut by 25% since 2010, but in the here and now, urgent action is necessary. There are 10,000 households in 213 tower blocks in Birmingham where rightly anxious tenants want action. Birmingham City Council has pledged that it will retrofit sprinklers to all those blocks. That will cost £31 million, but the council is suffering the biggest cuts in local government history and therefore urgently needs Government support. May I therefore ask for a straight yes-or-no answer? Will the Secretary of State guarantee that Birmingham City Council can go ahead and carry out that work, and that it will be refunded in full?

**Sajid Javid:** Birmingham City Council, like every other council, has a legal responsibility to its social tenants, so it should do whatever it believes is necessary. As I have said before, if there is an issue with funding for necessary works, we will provide the support.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): May I praise the swift response of the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council in responding to the concerns of residents in Cardiff South and Penarth, which has more than 14,000 apartment units, and urge Vale of Glamorgan Council to come up with some answers as soon as possible?

Will the Secretary of State look at the issue of estate management companies? I have seen very variable records of action on fire safety and response to concerns across many privately owned tower blocks in my constituency. Quite frankly, some of them are not living up to their responsibilities in terms of staffing, resourcing and looking at issues such as fire door, sprinkler and fire alarm safety.

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. One of the lessons from this tragedy and what we are learning now is that we should look at the private sector much more carefully, including estate management companies.

**Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): Thirteen Group owns most of the social housing across Teesside. It paid for fire-retardant and non-toxic cladding for the balconies at Kennedy Gardens in Billingham in my constituency but ended up with flammable, toxic material, which is now being removed. One thing was paid for and another dangerous alternative was provided. Does the Secretary of State agree that frauds such as those ought to be investigated and those responsible prosecuted?

**Sajid Javid:** I agree 100%.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): The Secretary of State said nothing about the cause of the fire. I realise that product safety is a matter for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, but given that this is his statement, will he say when the tests of the fridge-freezer model that caused the fire will be complete, whether other fires have been caused by this model and whether he will immediately change the advice that owners of this model can continue to use it, pending the outcome of the tests?

**Sajid Javid:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary and his Department are speaking to not just the manufacturer of the fridge-freezer concerned with regard to Grenfell Tower but a number of other manufacturers of white goods, some of which already have products on recall. The pace of recall is, frankly, far too slow, and my right hon. Friend is taking that very seriously.

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): Between 2010 and 2015, the Department for Communities and Local Government reduced its staff capacity by a higher proportion than any other Department—almost 40%. As a member of the Communities and Local Government Committee in the previous Parliament, I saw that in many areas the Department is clearly very stretched. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the number of staff in the Department is being increased, so that it can co-ordinate the national response to all aspects of the Grenfell Tower tragedy in an efficient and timely manner, including providing emergency support to any council that requests it?

**Sajid Javid:** Yes, it is being increased.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): I want to echo what colleagues have said about the need for certainty on funding coming into councils. As the Secretary of State will know, Bristol is facing £104 million of cuts over the next few years. We need to know whether we have to make other cuts. May I press him on a couple of changes that would help us to raise our own finance? One is scrapping the annual rent reduction rule, and the other is allowing us to spend all right-to-buy receipts on new housing, which would free up other money for investment. Will he talk to Bristol City Council about being able to do those two things, which would help us to pay for this work ourselves?

**Sajid Javid:** In the light of the pressures on local authorities, it would make sense to look carefully at policies that may help them to meet some of the challenges, and that is something we have already started doing.

**Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): Last week, the Prime Minister informed us that the DCLG would write to us with an update on safety tests of all tower blocks. There are 63 tower blocks in Lewisham, Deptford, but I have yet to receive any information, despite writing to the Minister and requesting the promised update. Will the Secretary of State provide an update now, and will the Government, having been asked umpteen times, commit to fully fund the fitting of sprinkler systems and any associated costs, to ensure that people's homes are safe?

**Sajid Javid:** Following the Prime Minister's statement, I sent a letter to every Member of Parliament and every Member of the other place on Friday; it has gone out. I believe I have answered the question on funding.

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): In the wake of the awful disaster at Fukushima, the German Government shut down all their nuclear plants, fearing that a catastrophe such as that could happen on their soil. Surely after an event like the Grenfell Tower tragedy, we should be looking to put sprinkler systems in all our tower blocks.

**Sajid Javid:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should certainly do whatever is deemed necessary by the local fire and rescue service—the fire safety experts—and ensure that we take all the action they recommend to keep our citizens safe.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that what happened at Grenfell Tower was a national disaster. The Treasury contingency fund exists exactly to provide funding in these sorts of disasters. What conversations has the Secretary of State had with the Chancellor about releasing money to ensure that all remedial work and accommodation on an emergency basis is funded directly by central Government for local authorities and housing associations?

**Sajid Javid:** The conversations I have had with the Chancellor reflect what I have said at the Dispatch Box today. If any local authority or housing association needs funding help for any necessary works, we will support them.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): May I praise the staff, officers and leader of Ealing Council, who stepped in to run the relief effort at the Westway centre when Kensington and Chelsea was overwhelmed? I am informed that standards at Ealing are higher than at RBKC. I do not know whether that is the case, but surely any inconsistency needs addressing, with minimum stringent requirements that apply across tenure, even to student halls of residence—we have a lot of high-rise halls in my seat—and that are in place well before the inquiry ever sees the light of day.

**Sajid Javid:** I very much agree with the hon. Lady's praise for the leader of Ealing, in particular for the help provided at the Westway centre. Ealing has taken this seriously in its response, like every council across London, but it is important that other councils do the same.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I have been contacted by many constituents concerned about our local hospital. Hull Royal Infirmary is a tower block and had cladding put on a couple of years ago. I note that the Secretary of State said that additional checks are being made on NHS properties. Are we likely to have a statement from the Secretary of State for Health about the outcomes of that investigation?

**Sajid Javid:** I will certainly pass on that request to the Secretary of State for Health, but I know that the whole Department of Health is taking the issue very seriously and is absolutely prioritising any buildings in the NHS estate that may have been clad.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): I note from the Secretary of State's statement that he has asked owners, landlords and managers of private sector residential blocks to consider their own buildings, but there are around 150 such privately owned residential blocks in Nottingham alone. What is he doing to ensure that those owners, landlords and managers do not just "consider" but act to ensure the safety of their residents? What is he doing to support local authorities, such as Nottingham City Council, that are working to secure such reassurances on behalf of their citizens?

**Sajid Javid:** First, we are reminding all the owners of those properties of their existing legal responsibilities. We have done that through their trade organisations, letting agents and other bodies. Secondly, we have made our testing facility available to all of them free of charge. We will keep monitoring that, but right now my absolute priority has been the more recently clad buildings held by local authorities and housing associations that have cladding similar to what was at Grenfell Tower.

**Julie Elliott** (Sunderland Central) (Lab): Five tower blocks in my constituency were found on Saturday lunchtime to have this dangerous cladding. By Sunday lunchtime it had all been removed. I praise the housing authority, the local authority and the fire and rescue service for working together. That work was done quickly and the buildings are safe, but obviously more work needs to be done to put them into a good state. Can the Secretary of State assure me that funding will be made available not just to local authorities—the local authority in my area does not have properties; there was a total stock transfer—but to the smaller housing authorities with that responsibility? Will the correct funding be made available to put right those works? Also, when tower blocks or other buildings are retrofitted, they might comply with building regulations at the time but things change, so will the building regulations be looked at to ensure that when that happens more checks take place?

**Sajid Javid:** I can confirm to the hon. Lady that our commitment on funding and providing support where necessary for those who need it also applies to housing associations.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): The Secretary of State said in his statement that the problem of unsafe cladding might not be confined to residential buildings. It is also not necessarily confined to high-rise tower blocks. There is a particular concern about sheltered housing, which was described to me as, in many cases, a tower block turned on its side. Will the facilities for testing where cladding has been applied to those buildings also be made available?

**Sajid Javid:** Yes, they will.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): The truth is that we in this country have for far too long tried to do social housing on the cheap, and in the end that decision by this country has killed people. I fully understand why the priority now is primarily residential property, but my hon. Friends are absolutely right: there are workplaces, too, that are probably dangerous. Indeed, the fire at the Glasgow School of Art showed that very old buildings are sometimes in the most danger, because they have lots of timber walls and floors that can easily spread fire from one part of the building to another. This building is one such. We have had hundreds and hundreds of warnings, but we have not acted on them. We have a fire alarm system so antiquated that it no longer works. When will the Government make sure that we do the work that this building needs?

**Sajid Javid:** I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman had to say and I will take it up with the Leader of the House.

## Points of Order

6.14 pm

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Queen's Speech last week failed to include the much expected local government finance Bill, the omission of which has called into question the switch to local retention of business rates replacing the revenue support grant, causing financial uncertainty and concern to many local councils. Has the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government given any indication to you of whether he intends to come to the House and give an oral statement, so that hon. and right hon. Members may question Ministers on this important issue? If not, Mr Speaker, is this a matter on which you will look favourably for an urgent question?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman has chanced his arm. In respect of the first part of his inquiry, my response is a conclusive no. The Secretary of State has not given me any indication of an intention to make a statement on that subject. He could do so now, but it is not compulsory. He can preserve a Buddha-like silence if he prefers, but if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to spring to his feet, either to offer his reassurance or otherwise, he can.

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid):** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. There is a debate on the Queen's Speech tomorrow about local services, so perhaps the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) would like to bring the matter up then.

**Mr Speaker:** We are grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that. So far as the matter of urgent questions is concerned, if memory serves me correctly, during my tenure to date I have chosen no fewer than 369. I am

therefore certainly not averse to selecting urgent questions and there is plenty of scope for them, but the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) is a seasoned enough contributor to our proceedings to know that we are not supposed to mention them on the Floor of the House—or at least a Member thinking of submitting such is not supposed to—and I am certainly not going to pre-announce them. I think there is a lot to be said for the worldly wisdom of the late Lord Whitelaw, who famously observed, “On the whole, I prefer to cross bridges only when I come to them.”

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As a new Member, I wonder whether the Chair can advise on the most effective way of raising the worrying news from my constituency today that the Royal Bank of Scotland has announced more than 400 job losses, to ascertain the potentially serious economic implications and whether this is in any way connected to the uncertainties surrounding Brexit.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady is undoubtedly a new Member, but she is clearly not a novice in finding very public opportunities to air her concerns on behalf of her constituents. The short answer is that she has of course already aired that concern through the device—or ruse in this case—of a perhaps slightly bogus point of order. However, my advice to her is that she should seek to question Ministers either orally at the appropriate time—there are many such opportunities, on which her colleagues can advise her—or through written questions. If, however, she wishes to dilate on the matter more fully and to hear a Minister do so in response, the mechanism available to her is an Adjournment debate. She should wend her way to the Table Office, where she will find highly qualified and very conscientious staff, who are only too happy to advise her. I just have a sense that we are going to hear further from the hon. Lady on this matter, and probably before very long.

## Debate on the Address

[3RD DAY]

*Debate resumed (Order, 22 June).*

*Question again proposed,*

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

## Brexit and Foreign Affairs

6.18 pm

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Davis):** May I start by commending the hon. Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine) for learning the ropes quicker than the rest of us did? I hope she has success with her Adjournment debate.

The negotiations over our exit from the European Union are fundamental to our future. It is no exaggeration to say that they will shape everything we want to achieve as a country over the coming years and decades. We are doing nothing less than refashioning Britain's place in the world. Our success or failure will determine and shape all our futures, so it is obviously a great responsibility but also a great opportunity, and it falls on all of us in this place—every one of us in this Parliament—to make a success of it. If we work together and we succeed, we can ensure a strong and growing economy that spreads prosperity and opportunity around the country, underpins well-funded public services and secures a better future for us and our children.

I have always made it clear that after Brexit the United Kingdom will continue to be the outward-looking global nation it has always been. Indeed, it should be more engaged in the world than ever before, for I firmly believe that last year's vote to leave the EU was not a call for retrenchment—a call to look in on ourselves. The UK has the means, the ambition and, now, the freedom to play a more positive role in the world.

**Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con):** I believe that the opportunities provided by Brexit will mean a global Britain. Does my right hon. Friend agree that leaving the customs union and the single market will allow us to forge trade links with countries such as China and the United States, which we cannot do on our own while we are members of the European Union?

**Mr Davis:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point, to which, if he will forgive me, I shall return a little later.

As I was saying, we have the means, the ambition and the freedom to play a more positive part in the world, which is demonstrated by our commitments on defence and international aid. The UK is the only country in the world that meets both its NATO pledge to spend 2% of GDP on defence and the UN target of devoting 0.7% of our gross national income to development spending. That ensures that we defend our values, work to tackle poverty and conflict, and help to protect the most vulnerable in the world.

**Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab):** The right hon. Gentleman has talked about our commitments to defence and our commitments to the rest of the world in respect of international aid, and I agree with what he has said about both, but what about the Government's commitment to Wales? Before the Brexit debate, Andrew R. T. Davies said:

“I will make it my mission to ensure that Wales continues to receive at least every penny of the aid money it has historically received via the EU—we deserve and are entitled to no less.”

Will Wales get what it deserves?

**Mr Davis:** Of course. Indeed, Wales is represented on the Joint Ministerial Committee, which has met several times, and that issue has arisen in the committee. The main funding streams for Wales stem from the common agricultural policy and structural funds, both of which have been underpinned by the Treasury until the end of the current financial round.

**Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab):** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op):** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** Not for the moment. I will make some progress, and then give way again. I must be fairly disciplined about giving way, because we have a very tight timetable.

After exiting the European Union, Britain will still be a country that steps up to its role as a world leader, and that means continuing to help to protect and secure our wider European continent. We want to deepen co-operation with other European states, and to bring European Union policy into a wider global framework. As we have said, we seek a deep and special partnership with the European Union: one that reflects our shared values and history, one that works for all parts of the United Kingdom, our overseas territories and Crown dependencies, and one that delivers for the special circumstances relating to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, because no one wants to see a return to the hard border. It should be underpinned by ambitious agreements on free trade and customs, covering goods and services and seeking the greatest possible tariff and barrier-free trade.

**Graham Stringer:** There has been much talk about transitional arrangements. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that if such arrangements are put in place there will be legally binding agreements on trade and customs arrangements, as well as the removal of those arrangements from the remit of the European Court of Justice?

**Mr Davis:** Yes, indeed. One of the things that we will endeavour to achieve is the establishment of such legally binding arrangements. I shall return to that point in some detail in a moment, if I may.

**Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP) rose—**

**Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab) rose—**

**Mr Davis:** I give way to the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley).

**Ian Paisley:** I appreciate what the Secretary of State has already said about the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Does he accept, however, that if security information indicates a radicalisation of people in the Republic, security considerations will always predominate in respect of the border issue?

**Mr Davis:** Security considerations pretty much always predominate when it comes to the control of immigration and control of migration generally, and there will be no difference in this case. We obviously treat the security of all our citizens, and all our allies' citizens, as paramount. There should be, for instance, a broad security agreement covering all aspects of our current collaboration, including defence, foreign policy, justice, home affairs, law enforcement and counter-terrorism, which should be supported by continued co-operation and open access in highly regulated areas such as aviation, financial services, data, transport and nuclear.

We recognise that such a wide-ranging partnership will require fair and uniform implementation. It must also be long-lasting. That is why we must ensure that mechanisms exist to manage the evolution of our regulatory frameworks to maintain a fair and open trading environment and minimise non-tariff barriers.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD) *rose*—

**Stephen Doughty:** Will the Secretary of State give way, on that point?

**Mr Davis:** On that point, I will give way to the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty).

**Stephen Doughty:** At the weekend, the Secretary of State said that he was “pretty sure” that he would get the sort of trading deal that he wants. Does he think that language of that sort provides the assurances that our businesses and our economy need?

**Mr Davis:** The question that was put to me was whether I was 100% sure. The first thing that one ought to learn in this business is to be honest about such matters. I do not think that saying at the beginning of a negotiation that one is 100% sure of exactly what the outcome will be would give confidence to anyone. It certainly would not give confidence to me, even if it was said by the hon. Gentleman.

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Davis:** One more time, but then I must make some progress.

**Charlie Elphicke:** The whole point of a negotiation is that one must be prepared and ready not to do a deal, because one can then ensure that one has strength in the negotiations. To that extent, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important for us to be ready to “do customs” at places such as my constituency of Dover, deal or no deal?

**Mr Davis:** I do agree with my hon. Friend that we must ensure that we are prepared for every contingency.

**Mr Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Davis:** No. If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I must make some progress.

A large part of my job—almost the invisible part—is ensuring that we are prepared for contingencies, and that is happening as we speak.

We have also made it clear that the new partnership must be overseen by a new and independent impartial dispute mechanism. That cannot and will not be the European Court of Justice. No nation outside the European Union submits to the direct jurisdiction of the ECJ, and neither will the United Kingdom. We will start to move towards the new partnership by securing the rights of citizens on both sides. I know that everyone in the House will agree with me that European Union citizens make a huge contribution to our society. We have heard today from the Prime Minister about what the approach will entail, but the overarching principle is that European citizens living in the United Kingdom will continue to lead their lives in exactly the same way as British citizens with the same rights and responsibilities.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No, not for the moment.

We intend to reach agreement on that issue as quickly as possible.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Mark Hendrick** (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** I have given way quite a lot so far. I am going to be disciplined. No! I am practising being masterful.

Not everything in these negotiations will be easy. They will be complex, and I have no doubt that at times they will even be confrontational. However, I am convinced that both sides want to secure close co-operation and a deep new partnership.

**Mike Gapes:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No, not for the moment. In a moment.

Last year, in the referendum, we received a national instruction, which we will undertake in a way that serves the national interest. The instruction from the British people was for us to take back control of our borders, our money and our laws. Both the Conservative party and the Labour party campaigned on manifestos that promised to exit the European Union and end the free movement of people. Those two manifestos received more than 80% of the popular vote, so failing to deliver on that instruction is not an option for those of us who count ourselves as democrats. Ending the free movement of people means leaving the single market, as the EU has made abundantly clear to those who have cared to listen.

**Mike Gapes** *rose*—

**Chris Bryant** *rose*—

**Mr Davis:** I give way to the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes).

**Mike Gapes:** The Secretary of State said that countries outside the European Union would not be directly within the remit of the European Court of Justice, but several countries outside the EU indirectly have arrangements with the European Union whereby the European Court of Justice or an equivalent body is established. Is that what the Secretary of State is aiming for?

**Mr Davis:** No. What the hon. Gentleman is describing is something like the Court of Justice of the European Free Trade Association States—the EFTA court—where there is a parallelism. That is not the aim. The aim is to have an independent arbitration arrangement, as is normal. For instance, the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement does exactly that. It has nominees from either side, and an independent chair. That is the sort of thing that we have in mind.

**Chris Bryant:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has to learn some discipline at some point in life. I thought discipline was his thing, but there we are.

Ending the free movement of people means leaving the single market, as the European Union has made abundantly clear to those who have cared to listen. We all accept the need to protect existing UK businesses in the European Union. Leaving the single market does not mean losing access to that market, which is why we are proposing a new, ambitious free trade agreement. But this is not just about protecting existing markets, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) said. To deliver the national interest, we must seize on our new freedoms in terms of trade to create jobs and lift living standards. Britain must get out into the world, forge its own path and be a true beacon for free trade.

**Chris Bryant:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No.

That means leaving the customs union, so that Britain will, for the first time in over 40 years, be able to take full advantage of growing markets across the world and determine a trade policy that is fashioned not around the interests of 28 countries but around those of one country. We will have a trade policy that suits this country and this country alone.

**Thangam Debonnaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No.

The European Commission itself says that 90% of the future growth in world trade will come from outside the European Union. This has already been reflected in the long-term decline in the share of British goods that go to the European Union, while our global trade has increased dramatically.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr Davis:** I shall give way to my hon. Friend, who knows all about this.

**Vicky Ford:** I have just come from the European Parliament. Does the Secretary of State agree that many colleagues across Europe want a deep trading partnership with Britain, based on keeping strong standards for consumers and other such standards, and therefore a special, bespoke relationship for our trade?

**Mr Davis:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on what I think is her maiden intervention. It was delivered brilliantly, as I would expect, and she is exactly right. We want a deep, special, bespoke arrangement to maximise our trade opportunities.

As I was saying, the 90% growth outside the European Union means that our relative share of trade in the EU has gone down. In services, for example, we are now 60% outside the EU and 40% inside it, and all of this is without preferential trade agreements for much of our trade. Just so that the House understands, the best academic data that I could find show that creating a new trade agreement increases the amount of trade by about 28%. If the House wants an individual parable, in the first seven years of its operation, the North American Free Trade Agreement increased trade by 40%. These are really significant items of policy that we can exercise.

**Tom Brake** *rose*—

**Mr Davis:** I see the right hon. Gentleman looking at me, so I shall give way to him.

**Tom Brake:** On the question of academic research, can the Secretary of State confirm what the most recent research says about the cost to the British economy of coming out of the single market and the customs union?

**Mr Davis:** That research would depend on what the actual deal was. It is madness to make an estimate without knowing what the deal is. If the deal involves a comprehensive free trade area with no tariffs and no non-tariff barriers, there will be zero effect. It is rather daft to try to cite some non-existent academic issue.

**Chris Bryant:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No, the hon. Gentleman has not yet earned my sympathy—

**Chris Bryant** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth):** Order. The Secretary of State has indicated that he is not going to give way to the hon. Gentleman, and I think the hon. Gentleman needs to accept that.

**Mr Davis:** If the House wants a Brexit deal that drives prosperity and living standards and if it really wants a Brexit for jobs, it must put its faith in free trade and ensure that our exit means that we can embrace the opportunities to the full. Let us move beyond the platitudinous propaganda of hard and soft Brexits. Let us instead discuss how we shall fashion our new place in the world and start to act together truly in the national interest. I will give way to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) now.

**Chris Bryant:** This is obviously the start of a very special relationship. The Secretary of State will know that the Prime Minister earlier published a document about EU citizens living in the UK. The one thing she failed to mention in the House was that all those EU citizens would not be functioning exactly as they are now. They will have to have documentation with them; they will effectively have to have an ID card. I am surprised: surely this Secretary of State is not going to support ID cards for EU nationals living in the UK.

**Mr Davis:** You know, I was right not to give way to the hon. Gentleman in the first place. He has got it wrong; it is not an ID card. We are talking about documentation to prove that people have the right to a job and the right to residence, but they will not have to carry that around all the time. It is not an ID card; it is rather like your birth certificate. It's not an ID card! Good heavens!

I shall turn now to the legislative agenda—

**Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con):** Would my right hon. Friend be kind enough to give way, just before he does so?

**Mr Davis:** This is going to be the last one, but yes, okay.

**Sir William Cash:** Does my right hon. Friend not think that those, such as the Liberal Democrats and others, who want to remain in the European Union should ask their constituents whether they really want the United Kingdom indefinitely to remain part of an undemocratic system that is governed by majority voting that takes place behind closed doors and that is moving towards integration with a common defence policy, a common Finance Ministry and further moves towards a political union in which we would be in the second tier of a two-tier Europe dominated largely by one country?

**Mr Davis** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth):** Order. I know that that intervention was short by the standards of the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), but by the standards of an intervention it was very long.

**Mr Davis:** Nevertheless, it was a crisp characterisation of an argument that my hon. Friend has been making for many years, Mr Deputy Speaker, and he is as right about it today as he was when he first made it.

An extensive legislative agenda is necessary to prepare the UK for its new place in the world. Working together in the national interest will be crucial as we go through the process in this House and the other place to put the necessary legislation in position to ensure that our laws work effectively on the day we leave the European Union. For my part, I am willing to work with anyone to that end. The sheer importance of this issue makes that essential. The eyes of the country will be on us all, and we will all be judged on our willingness to work pragmatically and effectively together to deliver the verdict of the people in last year's referendum.

Nothing is more central to this than the so-called great repeal Bill. The principle is straightforward: it is to repeal the European Communities Act 1972 and to

transfer existing European Union law into UK law. To answer a question that my opposite number, the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), has raised, these rights and freedoms will be brought into UK law without qualification, without limitation and without any sunset clauses. Any material changes will be dealt with by subsequent primary legislation.

I cannot stress enough to the House and to the nation the importance of this Bill in ensuring that we have a smooth and orderly exit from the European Union. Every part of the United Kingdom needs to prepare its statute book to ensure that it can function after we leave the European Union. The repeal Bill will give the devolved Administrations the power to do just that, to ensure a smooth and orderly exit for all. As we have also said repeatedly, we expect there to be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved Administration once we exit the EU. That is why, given that the Bill will affect the powers of the devolved institutions and that it legislates in devolved areas, we will seek the consent of the devolved legislatures for the Bill. We would like everyone to come together in support of the legislation, which will be crucial to delivering the outcome of the referendum.

**Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP):** In an earlier incarnation, the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), who is now the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, assured the people of Scotland that Scotland could expect to have devolved power over its immigration policy after Brexit. Does the Secretary of State still agree with that undertaking?

**Mr Davis:** No, I do not remember that, and I have not seen it. I will look into it and come back to the hon. Gentleman. I did not have an earlier incarnation in this job.

**Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green):** The Secretary of State talks about an extensive legislative agenda, but he is still missing out anything to do with the environment. There is no environment Bill here. Simply saying that we are going to transfer environmental legislation in the repeal Bill does not work, because the legislation will need to be updated and it will need to be enforceable. Without the Commission and the ECJ, there will be no clarity as to how that legislation would be enforced. Why is there no Bill?

**Mr Davis:** With respect, when it is transferred across, there will be stages in this, as I have explained, in which we will create—through statutory instruments or primary legislation—the relevant administrations and regulatory bodies to run the new legislation. Of course, development beyond that will come later, but at the moment we are talking about bringing the whole corpus of EU environmental law into British law. That is not nothing, by any stretch of the imagination.

**Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab):** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No. I have some progress to make.

When we designed our approach to the repeal Bill, we endeavoured to strike the right balance between getting our statute book in order for the day that we exit the European Union and ensuring full parliamentary

involvement and scrutiny. Indeed, it is the only viable plan that has been put forward in this House. While I have heard the Opposition raise some concerns, I have heard no alternatives or any detailed proposals on how they would approach this crucial matter. As I said to the Opposition spokesman when I presented our White Paper on the repeal Bill, if in the next two years we find that we have missed something, we will put it right, and that offer still stands not only to the Opposition, but to the entire House. We must get this right. We must be able to deliver a functioning UK statute book by the day we exit the European Union. When the House of Lords Constitution Committee examined the issue, it found few alternatives, and its recommended approach aligns closely with that which we have set out. It is vital for businesses, workers and consumers across the United Kingdom that this House undertakes the difficult but eminently achievable task of working together responsibly in the national interest to provide certainty and stability.

**Kate Green:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr Davis:** No, not for the moment.

While the repeal Bill is the centrepiece of our approach, it is far from the only piece of exit-related legislation that we will be putting through. The Government are bringing forward a first tranche of Bills—I say to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) that it will not be the last—on areas affected by our exit from the European Union, including trade, customs, immigration, international sanctions, nuclear safeguards, agriculture, and fisheries. I have told the House several times that we will not make significant policy changes without first passing primary legislation, which will be thoroughly debated and voted on in both Houses. Those Bills deliver on that promise.

This initial tranche of Bills also has a further purpose. I am sure that many across the House will agree that it is the job of a responsible Government to prepare for all eventualities. I make it clear yet again today that we want a close new partnership with the EU that works for everyone, as mentioned a few moments ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke). However, we must also ensure that we have a functioning statute book and functioning national systems—no matter what and for all outcomes. The Bills will help to provide that. As I think my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) put it when he was Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, not doing so would be a “dereliction of duty”. We must and will be prepared for any outcome.

However, I remain confident that we can get the right deal from the negotiations. Doing so is fundamentally in the interests of both the UK and the EU. A strong and prosperous EU, capable of projecting its values and continuing to play a leading role in the world, is in the United Kingdom’s best interests, just as a strong and prosperous United Kingdom is the European Union’s best interests. The task ahead will no doubt be challenging, but it is a task that the British people set us in last year’s referendum—a national instruction. It is our duty in this House to pull together and deliver on that instruction in the national interest. If we do, we can deliver a better and brighter future for the entire United Kingdom—a future in which we step on to the world stage as a champion for free trade, a firm advocate of the rule of law, and a true beacon for democracy.

6.42 pm

**Keir Starmer** (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): When Britain voted in the referendum one year and four days ago, the question on the ballot paper was narrow and technical—to remain in or to leave the European Union—but the vote was far from narrow and technical. People saw different questions behind those boxes. Above all, the referendum was a vote on the state of the nation, just as the general election turned out to be. The nation is fed up with inequality, fed up with low wages, fed up with under-resourced public services, fed up with the imbalances between our nations and regions, fed up with austerity, and fed up with politics and politicians. If ever there was a need for a Government capable of transforming the country both economically and politically, it is now. Britain needed a transformative Queen’s Speech last week, but this Government are too weak to deliver it. The Queen’s Speech is threadbare and lacking in ambition. There is no detail, and there cannot be, because the Prime Minister gambled and lost. A majority has become a minority. All bets are off for the future. Just when we needed strong government, we have uncertainty and fragility, and I suspect that history will be a harsh critic.

It does not end there. When the Prime Minister made her statement calling for the general election, she said:

“Every vote for the Conservatives will make me stronger when I negotiate for Britain...Every vote for the Conservatives will mean we can stick to our plan”.

She wanted a landslide; she ended up in a mess—her own description. She now has no majority, no mandate, and no authority, and it tells.

The outcome of the first round of negotiations showed how unrealistic the Government’s rhetoric has been. The Secretary of State promised before the election that there would be the “row of the summer” over the Commission’s proposed timetable and schedule for the negotiations. By lunchtime on Monday, he had folded. The Government have also managed to get on the back foot in relation to EU citizens. Had they acted quickly and unilaterally, as Labour repeatedly said that they should, they could have set the agenda. The EU did so instead and stated its position in April: full rights as they are currently enjoyed to be guaranteed and underpinned by the European Court of Justice. The Government’s position is now seen by the EU as an inadequate response.

Although the Prime Minister struggled to give an adequate answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), the Secretary of State and I know, and our EU partners know, that the rights of family reunification currently enjoyed by EU nationals will change, and they will be subject in future to financial and other qualifications that apply more generally. The rights will change, and that is perhaps why that question was avoided. I hope that we get an agreement on EU citizens and on UK citizens, and I hope that we get an early agreement to settle the anxiety, but the Government’s approach to date has made that harder to achieve than it should have been.

**Mr David Davis:** On a point of information, may I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman—congratulations by the way—whether it is now Labour policy to support the rule of the European Court of Justice within the United Kingdom?

**Keir Starmer:** Let me deal with that in relation to EU citizens first. I will discuss it more generally when I get to that part of my speech.

As far as EU nationals are concerned, we need to understand the worries of our EU partners. Whatever agreement is put in place, they recognise that it has to last for the lifetime of EU nationals here—the lifetime. In some cases, that will mean 50-plus years. They know how our system works. They know that no one Government can bind the next. Their concern is understandable. What is given in good faith and assured today can be taken away in a year, two years, five years or 10 years, yet their citizens want to live their lives here for decades. That is why they want some mechanism, external to our parliamentary regime, to underpin those rights. It is no answer to their concern simply to say, “We have the best judges; we have the Supreme Court,” because, as the Secretary of State understands, if the law of this country changes in five years and these people’s rights are reduced, our Supreme Court will have to apply the legislation as it is then rather than any agreement that is reached now. That is their concern.

When pressed on the matter last week, the Prime Minister made it clear—I think this is in the document that was produced today—that this will be an international agreement and will therefore be subject to international enforcement. It is a pretence that this can all be done within our courts and our own jurisdiction. I will come to the wider question later, but if we are talking about honesty and proceeding in a grown-up way, it would be far better if the Government recognised the EU’s core concerns and found a way of ensuring that they are met, because this is about the lives of real people for decades and decades.

**Charlie Elphicke:** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will make some progress, if I may.

Back home, the divisions are obvious. The Chancellor’s Mansion House speech last week was clearly an attempt to spike the Prime Minister’s Brexit approach. Thus he spoke of a “jobs and prosperity first” Brexit. That reflects the Labour party manifesto, in which we spoke of a “jobs and...economy first” Brexit. The Chancellor also spoke of an

“early agreement on transitional arrangements”

and no “cliff edge” for the economy, and that is in the Labour party manifesto, which said we would

“negotiate transitional arrangements to avoid a ‘cliff-edge’”.

He has clearly been reading about our position.

The Chancellor spoke of a “management of migration”, not shutting it down. The Labour party manifesto spoke of

“fair rules and reasonable management of migration.”

Was his speech a personal view, the Government’s view, or the view that he hopes the next Prime Minister will take? Clearly we cannot go on like this.

**Mr Jenkin:** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will in just a moment.

This approach is damaging our reputation abroad and weakening our position. Like the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, I was in Brussels last

week. The talk in Brussels is, “What is going on? How long are this Government going to last?” We have put ourselves in the worst possible starting position.

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): While we are on the right hon. and learned Gentleman’s manifesto, will he clear up an important point? Directly after the general election, having fought on a manifesto that made it clear that the Labour party would take back control of the borders, his leader, the shadow Chancellor and the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) made it clear that Labour’s position was to take back control of our borders, and to leave the single market and the customs union. Subsequently, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has gone out and said that leaving the single market and the customs union are not absolutes and are on the table. Will he clear up what the Labour party’s position really is?

**Keir Starmer:** That is not an accurate reflection of what I said. I will come to that in due course—*[Interruption.]* I will come to it when I get to that part of my speech.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State need to acknowledge the effect of the general election on their Brexit strategy. If the general election was an attempt, as the Prime Minister said, to strengthen her hand on Brexit, the outcome is a powerful case for a rethink. It is time to press the reset button. First, the tone and approach have to change. The belligerent, hostile attitude to date has alienated our allies and left Britain isolated. We need a more constructive and responsible approach. We share values with our EU partners, with whom we have a shared history. We will continue to share values, and we want a shared future: not membership of the EU—that was decided last year—but a full and meaningful partnership, based on principles of co-operation and collaboration. *[Interruption.]* The Foreign Secretary does not understand. I am talking about tone and approach, which is particularly pertinent for him. Anyone who has been backwards and forwards to Brussels knows very well how badly some of his comments have gone down with our EU partners. This is about building an environment in which we can get the best deal for our country, which is in all our interests.

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): Speaking of tone and approach, may I request that the right hon. and learned Gentleman changes his tone and approach to something a bit more positive? Brexit is an opportunity for our country to grasp, not a crisis to manage. It is hypocritical and arrogant of him to look behind what the British people voted for last year.

**Keir Starmer:** One of the biggest risks to these negotiations is utter complacency—the failure to realise the risks and complexity of the negotiations. It is quite right for the Opposition to challenge the Government at every twist and turn to ensure that these negotiations go as well as possible.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will make some progress.

In addition to tone and approach, the second thing that needs to change is that we need to drop the “no deal is better than a bad deal” mantra.

**Andrew Bridgen:** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will make my point and then I will give way.

No deal would be a miserable failure. As the Chancellor said last week, no deal would be a very, very bad outcome indeed, but it is what happens automatically on 29 March 2019 if we do not reach agreement—we will be gently pushed over a cliff. Threatening to jump does not kid anyone. No deal means no agreement at all—no agreement on trade, no agreement on security and no arrangements for passing on information, because that is all done according to an EU framework.

**Mr David Davis:** All?

**Keir Starmer:** Not all, but most of it. The Secretary of State knows this very well and he should not belittle it. If we do not reach agreement, we will have nothing in place to replicate current arrangements for passing across security, intelligence, counter-terrorism and counter-crime information—[*Interruption.*] There is no point in the Foreign Secretary giving that pained expression. No agreement will also mean that we have not reached an agreement on aviation, the Northern Ireland border or EU citizens. That is what no deal is; no deal means no agreement.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union said that we must be honest in this debate. He must know in his heart of hearts that no deal is an untenable position for the United Kingdom to find itself in in 2019, so let today be the day when we bury the phrase, “No deal is better than a bad deal.”

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): For the shadow Secretary of State to be balanced in his view on no deal, he also needs to talk about what no deal means for the EU27. We looked at this on the Foreign Affairs Committee and, actually, the experts say that no deal is as harsh for the EU27 as it is for the United Kingdom. A bit of balance in the right hon. and learned Gentleman’s words would go down well in developing a common policy on this issue.

**Keir Starmer:** I readily accept that not only do we need a deal but that the EU needs a deal, which is why we should not talk up no deal as a viable strategy or adopt the Foreign Secretary’s position that no deal is perfectly okay. No deal is not a viable or tenable option. No deal means that we have not agreed anything.

**Ian Paisley:** Does the shadow Secretary of State accept that by adopting a narrative that is so wholly uncritical of the European Union, he leaves himself and his party open to the charge that they wish to subvert the will of the British people? Does he hold to page 6 of his own manifesto, which says we wish to leave the European Union?

**Keir Starmer:** I do not think that shooting the idea that no deal is viable, tenable or, honestly, a position we could possibly arrive at in 2019 is adopting the position of the EU. It is actually adopting the position of the UK. The UK needs a deal to safeguard its interests. This is a point made in the national interest.

**Mr Jenkin:** It is realistic to imagine that we will not get a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU when we leave and that interim arrangements will persist under WTO rules, which may well be zero-tariff rules, but we would have to believe the EU was seriously insane if it wanted to ground all flights between the UK and the EU, if it refused to offer the products and standards arrangements it has with 100 or more other countries—whether or not it has a free trade deal with those countries—or if it wanted to check every Mini exported to the EU to see whether it fits the EU’s definition of a car. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman really think the EU is so insane that it would want to do that?

**Keir Starmer:** This mischaracterisation of the point I am making does not help. This is not the EU demanding here; if we do not have a lawful basis for these activities in the UK, we do not have the authority to do this. It is no good talking up a “no deal” as if it is a viable, tenable option.

**Andrew Bridgen** *rose*—

**Keir Starmer:** I am going to press on to my third point about the reset: we need a razor-like focus on how we retain the benefits of the single market and the customs union. The Secretary of State stood at that Dispatch Box on 24 January and promised this House that we he would reach an agreement that provided the “exact same benefits” as single market membership and the customs union. He knows, because we have raised it repeatedly since then, that we will hold him to that; it is one of the six tests I set out for the Government to meet in the final agreement.

**Mike Gapes:** Does the shadow Secretary of State agree that the best way to get the benefits of the single market is by staying in it? [*Interruption.*]

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth):** Order. The shadow Secretary of State will be heard, and if that means people being removed from Chamber, that will happen.

**Keir Starmer:** Our manifesto was absolutely clear about retaining the benefits of the single market and the customs union. As for membership, although almost everybody who wants a progressive new relationship with the EU wants to retain the benefits of the single market and the customs union, almost everybody accepts that that cannot be done in an unreformed way, because of the rules of the single market as they now are. The question of whether we start from reform of the single market or from a bare agreement and then work up is secondary to the outcome we want to achieve. The outcome we want to achieve is: no tariffs for goods going across from us to the EU, and vice-versa; no new red tape at customs, including rules of origin; and a deal that works for services as well as for goods.

We have to recognise the concerns of the EU, and two in particular. First, the main concern is that if we are released from all obligations of a regulatory nature in relation to moving goods and services across Europe, we will be able to undercut EU countries economically. Secondly, if we strike free trade agreements that are released from any of the standards and regulations that

[Keir Starmer]

they apply, there is the prospect of flooding the UK with goods and products from other countries which do not meet those standards and/or go into Europe. Those are the issues we need to negotiate.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Keir Starmer:** I want to deal with this point, because I know it is an issue of real concern to my party. We have said that the outcomes are what matter, not the model for achieving them.

**Mr Jenkin:** I listened carefully to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman was saying, and he said he does not want to have to adopt rules of origin. How will we avoid doing so unless we are in a customs union relationship with the EU?

**Keir Starmer:** I have said on a number of occasions that we should leave being in the customs union on the table. What the Government have done is to sweep these options off the table without evidence, without facts and without assessing the risks. We have said that what we should do is focus on the outcomes. One of the best ways to achieve tariff-free access across Europe is to have the customs union on the table at least as an option to consider.

**Mr David Davis:** I apologise for interrupting the right hon. and learned Gentleman's flow, but the leader of his party said a couple of hours ago in this House, when I believe the right hon. and learned Gentleman was in the Chamber, that he wanted to strike free trade deals around the world. How is that possible if we remain a member of the customs union?

**Keir Starmer:** The Secretary of State knows very well what I said, and I said it carefully—

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Mark Garnier):** Chaos!

**Keir Starmer:** I am not sure how I respond—[*Laughter.*]

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth):** Order. I am not quite sure what all the hilarity is for. This is a very serious matter and it should be debated in a serious manner.

**Keir Starmer:** I am just considering how I respond to a cry of “chaos” from a Government who two months ago had a majority but now have a minority and are going into a grubby deal with the DUP. The Secretary of State will have heard exactly how I put it: we focus on retaining the benefits of the single market and the customs union—the exact same benefits, to use his phrase. [*Interruption.*] I am answering the question. The Secretary of State talked about the “exact same benefits” of the customs union. How is that to be achieved? [*Interruption.*] You did. You know you did, because we have put it to you several times since. My answer was not a fixed position saying, “We must have this model when we start the negotiations.” My answer is: focus on the outcomes and leave options on the agreement until we have some assessment of the risk and costs of the different options. One thing we do not have from the Government is any assessment of the risks and costs.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Keir Starmer:** I am going to press on to dealing with transitional agreements—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am not sure what part of the words “I am going to press on” right hon. and hon. Members do not understand. The Opposition spokesman has made it clear that he intends, for the present, to press on, and that should be respected until such time as he changes his mind.

**Keir Starmer:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. If we are to obtain the exact same benefits of the single market and the customs union, it would be a good start if the Government now accepted that the negotiations will not be complete by March 2019, that transitional arrangements will be needed if we are to avoid a cliff edge and that transitional arrangements must safeguard our economy and jobs, and provide certainty for business. This also means that by the time of the final agreement at the end of transitional arrangements, a model or framework will have to have been agreed which truly does deliver the exact same benefits as the single market and the customs union. We also need a recognition—if we are being honest—that in the end, if we are going to have a meaningful and ongoing relationship with the EU, a court-like body will be needed to settle disputes. I refer not just to state to state disputes, but business to business disputes and individual to individual disputes.

We need to address a further issue on reset: the involvement of Parliament. For the first six months after the referendum decision, the Government fought in the courts to prevent this House having a say even on the triggering of article 50. They then called a general election to crush the opposition to their Brexit strategy, and that approach has to change. There needs to be a much stronger role for Parliament; we need to strengthen scrutiny and accountability, not push it away. Let us start in the following way—I hope and believe this will be agreed: this House needs a formal statement from the Secretary of State after each round of the negotiations, so that we can hear how he reports on progress and we can ask questions. I ask him to set that precedent now and agree that he will come to this House to report in a formal statement.

**Mr David Davis:** As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the answer is yes, I will. The only reason we did not do this today is that we had a statement from the Prime Minister on, in effect, the same subject and, I was hoping, a whole day's debate on it now.

**Keir Starmer:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that, and I understand the point he makes about what happened today—we had a discussion about it earlier. I am grateful that he will set the precedent for the future rounds, the dates of which we know, to come back to this House at the earliest opportunity to make a statement so that we can debate it and question him here.

Let me turn to the repeal Bill. We recognise the need to entrench all EU rights and protections in our law—I said that when the White Paper was published and I say it again now—hence our manifesto proposed an EU rights and protections Bill designed to that end. How it is done matters. As proposed, the repeal Bill would

contain sweeping powers for the Executive, with no enhanced safeguards. The statutory instrument procedure has no enhanced safeguards. That is far too sweeping to be accepted across this House. I hear what the Secretary of State says and I take him at his word when he says that there will be no limitations, no qualifications and no sunset clauses. I hope that that message is getting through to his Back Benchers, because many of them campaigned to leave the EU on the very basis that those rights should either not exist or be much reduced or limited. I look forward to seeing a strong three-line Whip through this Bill, making sure that there are no limitations, no qualifications and no sunset clauses.

The repeal Bill does not include the Charter of Fundamental Rights—I hear what the Secretary of State says about that—or any future proofing to ensure that we do not fall behind our EU partners as standards evolve, particularly in the workplace. There are at least seven other Bills, but there is no detail about them because no agreement can be reached on what to put in them.

The Prime Minister called a general election saying that it would provide “certainty and stability” as we enter the Brexit negotiations. Nothing could be further from the truth. We need a deal, and a deal that works. We have started the negotiations in the worst of all circumstances. Britain deserves better than that.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth):** Order. Before we move on to the next speech, may I announce that, to begin with, there will be an eight-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches? Almost inevitably, that will have to be reduced still further later in the debate.

7.11 pm

**Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con):** Where I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) is on the fact that the decision that was taken just over one year ago was probably the most momentous political decision taken in my lifetime and that it will have profound consequences for this country. Obviously, it is essential that we should try to get the best possible deal. Unlike him, though, I campaigned in favour of a leave vote and I continue to believe that the decision that was taken is in the best interests of this country and offers huge opportunities for us both to reassert the supremacy of Parliament in our becoming an independent self-governing nation again and to take advantages of the opportunities that are opening up to us around the world.

Negotiating many of the detailed issues will be the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and the talks are just beginning. I do not agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman when he says that no deal is necessarily worse than whatever bad deal we may get. It would be crazy for us to go in at the start stating that we could not contemplate not reaching a deal. That is a guarantee of not getting the best outcome. I do not want to spend too much time on the negotiations. I hope that, if I am successful in re-joining the Select Committee under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn)—if he is chosen as the Chairman—we will be seeing a great deal of the Secretary of State.

The opportunities that come from our decision are set out very clearly in the Queen’s Speech, and the first is the repeal Bill. I would have thought that everybody in this House welcomed the fact that, as we are going to leave the European Union in two years’ time or thereabouts, the repeal Bill will give certainty as it ensures that European law, which currently applies, will be transferred into British law. It also gives us the opportunity to consider at our leisure each of those individual measures to decide whether they are most appropriately framed and whether we could reduce some of the burden, or, in some instances, perhaps even increase the protection if we think that that is the right thing to do. The repeal Bill is not necessarily about reducing regulation—although there may well be plenty of examples where it is sensible to do so—but about giving us back the control to decide for ourselves the most appropriate level of regulation.

The immigration Bill will allow us to design our own system of determining whom we should welcome into this country and to whom we should say that we simply cannot accommodate them given the need to reduce the overall level. It means that we can create an immigration system that is fair to all and that does not discriminate in favour of European citizens against non-European citizens. We can judge everybody on the basis of what contribution they can make.

The agriculture Bill will allow us to design a system of support for farmers that is tailor-made for the benefit of British agriculture. It is not a one-size-fits-all system, which has to accommodate Greek olive growers just as much as it does wheat farmers in Essex. I hope that it will mean that we can deliver more support to British farming, and at a cheaper price as we will not have to be sending the money across to Brussels to have it judged, recycled and sent back to us.

**Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con):** On that point, my right hon. Friend will surely agree that the common agricultural policy is one of the most environmentally destructive pieces of policy in the history of policy. Repatriating the common agricultural policy gives us an opportunity to ensure that, as we dish out vast quantities of taxpayers’ funds to landowners, we get something in return, including biodiversity and general benefits for our natural environment.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir David Amess):** Before the right hon. Gentleman responds, let me make this appeal to the House. There are 37 speakers and a number of Members waiting to make their maiden speeches. If there are lots of interventions, we will be down to a three or four-minute time limit. I appeal to Members on both sides of the House to reduce their interventions.

**Mr Whittingdale:** I accept your stricture, Mr Amess. I agree completely with my hon. Friend, whom I am delighted to see back in his place in the House of Commons. British farming is already doing a great deal to support the environment. In designing a new system of support, we should emphasise that farmers need to be rewarded for what they are doing to conserve the landscape for future generations.

The fisheries Bill allows us to right a wrong that was done about 40 years ago. Many fishermen in this country feel that they were sold out when we joined the European

[*Mr Whittingdale*]

Union and were the price that we had to pay for membership. This Bill will allow us to restore their traditional fishing rights.

The trade Bill allows us now to reach new agreements with the countries that offer the greatest opportunities—the countries that are experiencing the fastest growth and where there is the most likely demand for British exports and British goods. It is no coincidence that there is no European trade deal with China, India, Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, or the United States of America, and yet all those countries want to do business with us and trade with us, and this gives us the opportunity to do so.

This debate about hard Brexit versus soft Brexit is a complete fiction. Soft Brexit does not exist. Apparently, it means remaining within the single market and customs union, which means that we will not be able to set our own immigration policy or our own trade policy and that we will still be subject to the European Court of Justice. Frankly, soft Brexit is worse than remaining a member of the European Union. The reasons that we wanted to leave the European Union require us no longer to be a member of either the single market or the customs union. Therefore, I strongly support the approach taken by my right hon. Friend and the Prime Minister.

I am pleased to see the Foreign Secretary in his place. He may know that I have taken a long-standing interest in events in Ukraine, and I am delighted that he will be meeting the Prime Minister of Ukraine next week. Ukraine may have passed out of the headlines, but the conflict going on in that country is still raging. About 2,700 troops have died since 2014 and nearly 10,000 have been wounded. This is a country on the mainland of continental Europe, part of which is still under occupation in Crimea by Russian troops. In another part, a separatist movement supported by Russia is waging war. We support the Minsk process to try to put that right, but we do have a responsibility as one of the original signatories to the Budapest memorandum, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine. I very much welcome the attention that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is paying to this, and I hope that he will take the opportunity next week to express once again the very firm support of the British Government for the people of Ukraine.

I welcome the counter-terrorism review that has been initiated, but there is one aspect that I want to highlight in the hope that my right hon. Friends will draw it to the attention of the Home Secretary. Many people were quite distressed to see in the streets of London very recently the flags of Hezbollah in the al-Quds day rallies. Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation. The military wing is already proscribed in this country, but there is frankly very little distinction between it and the so-called civilian wing, the political wing. I know the Home Secretary has said she will look at this. It is already proscribed in many countries such as the United States, Canada and the Netherlands. Given the distress that was caused by seeing the flags paraded through London, and people calling for the extermination of Israel and supporting what is a terrorist organisation, I hope she will look at that matter urgently.

7.20 pm

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): I start on a European theme, which is apt. The Prime Minister called the election because she was concerned about the opposition to her ideas on our future relationship with Europe. In response, the electorate made politics in this place that little bit more European: no one party holding a majority and parties being forced by the electorate to work together is common in other European legislatures and it is an idea that we certainly welcome. At long last, this place seems to be catching up with ideas that have caught on elsewhere in the UK, with minority Governments in both Edinburgh and Cardiff at the moment. Once again, Westminster appears to be playing catch up with both the devolved Administrations and our European partners.

No party in the House, not least mine or others, has a majority of wisdom or all the good ideas. Big decisions will be made that impact on us all and are the responsibility of this place, devolved Administrations and local government. I have said before that democracy no longer begins and ends here, and the same should be true of decision making, so I welcome the Secretary of State's remarks earlier about a legislative consent motion. If I may say this to him, I do not expect the devolved Administrations to give the Government a blank cheque, and nor should he expect one.

Only two parties in this Parliament won a majority of the seats in which they stood at the election: the Democratic Unionist party and the Scottish National party. I hope that they will be listened to in equal measure on these issues. In spite of our clear mandate, we are prepared to listen and work with other parties.

I also recognise the loss of some of our finest parliamentarians at the last general election. After all, Angus Robertson—I have heard the chuntering from those on the Labour Benches, but they could learn a thing or two from him about providing effective opposition to that lot—was a parliamentarian who managed to show up the Prime Minister long before the Labour party managed to do so.

Alex Salmond is a political giant and one of the few parliamentarians with extensive experience of minority government. The UK Government may wish to reflect on the fact that the former First Minister led a Government for a full term, passing historic measures on free education, world-beating climate change measures and measures on universal services that remain the envy of the rest of the UK, with just 47 out of 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament. That is something that they will perhaps reflect on.

We on these Benches stand on the shoulders of giants, and if I might be permitted to say so, Mr Deputy Speaker, that includes our former leader and former Member for Dundee, East, Gordon Wilson, who passed away yesterday. It is easy to forget in these days when some in this Chamber claim that a majority of Scottish seats is somehow a failure that our former leader sat in a group of two. In spite of those numbers, he provided Dundee and Scotland with a powerful voice. We on these Benches, and I think elsewhere, owe him a huge debt of gratitude. We think of him and of his wife, Edith, at this moment.

Given the dynamics of Parliament, the SNP group will use its position to work with others where we can. That will be especially important in terms of our future

relationship with our European partners. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of those negotiations to each and every one of us. It is fair to say and abundantly clear that this Government do not have all the answers on our future relationship with Europe. They have taken up the “whole lotta nothing” provided by Vote Leave and built on that with a year of not much in the way of progress. I am afraid to say to the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union that the talks have not got off to the best of starts, as the Labour spokesperson, the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), said. The Secretary of State promised us the “row of the summer” over whether trade talks should start at the same time as talks on agreeing the cost of Brexit. That has turned into the “sound of silence”—the new quiet man, indeed, of Conservative party politics. It would be comical if it were not so serious.

The whole Government must have some culpability for the vacuum that has been left in our relationship with Europe, and none more so than the Foreign Secretary, who sat at the heart of the leave campaign and has spent a year in the Foreign Secretary’s chair giving us not much more detail than we had previously.

A minority Administration leaves all of us in this Chamber, not least those of us on the SNP Benches and Members across the Opposition Benches, with an opportunity. May I give credit to my colleagues from across the political divide who have put aside political differences to table amendments such as that which stands in my name and that of other colleagues, and I include in that the hon. Members for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) and for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas)? We will not agree on everything, but where we can agree we should try to come together.

We certainly agree that we should try to retain our membership of the single market and the customs union, and provide both a role for devolved Administrations and security for EU nationals, which, frankly, they deserve and which we should have given them long before now. That respects the referendum result. In fact, in July last year, just after the EU referendum, the Secretary of State for Scotland, no less, argued:

“My role is to ensure Scotland gets the best possible deal and that deal involves clearly being part of the single market.”

We had a referendum that delivered a narrow win for leave and a general election in which no one won a majority, but there was certainly a rejection of a hard Tory Brexit, so where we can come together we should do so. There has to be—I will say it clearly—a four-nation, cross-party and cross-institutional approach. That is the clear mandate that we have been given from the electorate across the UK.

In terms of the devolved Administrations, it is important that the Government do not turn the great repeal Bill—or rather the repeal Bill now—into the power grab undermining devolution. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) pointed out, whatever happened to the promise from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that it would be “for Scotland to decide” its immigration levels? For the avoidance of doubt, and there seemed to be some from the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, that came from the DEFRA Secretary just before, on “Good Morning Scotland” no less.

I am a passionate pro-European and our relationship with the EU is one that gave me many opportunities. It has made us all safer, healthier and wealthier, and the UK’s departure is bad news for our EU partners, but worse news for us in the UK. In fact—I see the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) in his place—it was our Foreign Affairs Committee report that found that although no deal would be bad for our European partners, it would be much worse for the UK. That was the conclusion that we collectively came to.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): I would not want the hon. Gentleman accidentally to misrepresent our report. What we precisely said was that there would be mutually assured damage if there was no deal and that in absolute terms the damage would probably be greater to the 27 than to us, because that is where the balance of trade and the money flows sit, but that in relative terms the damage would be greater to the UK. I think that is a full summary of the conclusions of our report, which we fairly reported.

**Stephen Gethins**: I thank the, at the moment, former Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee for that intervention, but what he makes clear and what we came to a collective decision on was that this will be damaging for the UK. It is damage that we are causing to ourselves, and that we can do something about. We are willing to compromise. The Scottish Government’s publication, “Scotland’s Place in Europe”, provided a route towards a mid-way option. That openness, despite the fact that Scotland and my constituents voted overwhelmingly to remain part of the EU, shows the way we have to go.

I want to touch briefly on a couple of other issues apart from Europe. We are undergoing the worst refugee crisis in European terms and global displacement stands at almost 60 million people—its highest ever level. UK foreign policy must bear some responsibility, and I am sure that the Foreign Secretary will reflect on some of the measures that we should be taking. Not least, we have those fleeing conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the open door that is the failed state in Libya. In Syria, which is so closely linked to the refugee crisis, we need a coherent, long-term strategy. With regard to Yemen, we on the SNP Benches will continue to ask questions about arms sales to those involved in the conflict.

I was glad to hear the right hon. Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale) mention Ukraine. On Russia, we must continue to work with our European partners, not least in relation to Russia’s actions in Ukraine, the Caucasus and elsewhere. I am grateful to him for making those points.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): All the party manifestos committed the UK Government to retaining the 0.7% aid target, but does my hon. Friend share my concern about some of the language in the Conservative manifesto, which seemed to suggest that the Government could simply redefine aid and spend it on whatever they wanted?

**Stephen Gethins**: My hon. Friend, as usual, makes an excellent point. In this Parliament we will seek to build on the good work he did in his previous role as our international development spokesperson, especially with reference to the 0.7% commitment. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary will also mention that.

[Stephen Gethins]

In conclusion, my appeal is that we continue to work together. Our European neighbours remain our closest partners, not just geographically, but economically, culturally and politically. That reality needs to start seeping in. We will work as constructively as we can with colleagues in other political parties, but there must be an openness and a willingness to do so.

7.31 pm

**Stephen Crabb** (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak so early in the debate. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins); I enjoyed listening to his speech and appreciate the spirit in which he made it. I think that many Members on both sides of the House will wish to return to the theme of working together pragmatically. It will certainly inform some of the remarks that I make in the next few minutes.

I have not taken many of the opportunities that we have had in this House over the past 12 months to speak about Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. In part that is because I had campaigned strongly for us to remain and on referendum day found myself part of the minority in the country, and certainly in my constituency, which voted strongly to leave. I have spent part of the past year trying to understand what drove that vote, not least in my constituency and across Wales, and how the debate is evolving. I have one or two observations to make.

First, I have been deeply impressed by the pragmatic and assiduous approach taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State over the past 10 months. I think that it has been appreciated on both sides of the House and, judging by what people on the continent tell me, deeply valued in the discussions with our European counterparts. Listening to his remarks today, and to those of the shadow Secretary of State, the newly right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), I was struck by the fluidity and room for manoeuvre that exists in both Front-Bench positions.

That fluidity might reflect different shades of opinion within the Government, and certainly within the Opposition, on how we should take forward the Brexit negotiations, but it also reflects a level of pragmatism. Listening to both Front Benchers this afternoon, I asked myself whether a pragmatic centre ground might be emerging around which Members on both sides could coalesce. One of the things I took from the general election campaign is that the country remains hopelessly divided on this issue. If we in this Chamber are to do anything over the next two years, it should be to provide some kind of leadership that helps bring the country together.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): No tariffs; frictionless trade; the best possible access to, but not membership of, the single market—is not the truth that there is vanishingly little difference between the strategic priorities of those on both Front Benches? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would help our constituents, and indeed our negotiators, if all parties were to make that clear?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir David Amess):** Order. Before the right hon. Gentleman replies, I appeal again to the House, because the more interventions there are, the less time there will be for the very many Members who wish to speak, including those who wish to make their maiden speeches.

**Stephen Crabb:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, because I was about to say that I was also struck by how similar the strategic objectives of both Front Bench positions actually are. The outlines are emerging of what I hope will be a pragmatic, sensible Brexit deal that can command widespread support across the country. The Government and the Opposition are united in wanting to prioritise jobs and prosperity and to protect workers' living standards and the interests of our business community—I do not think that there is any dispute about that. However, getting an outcome that actually delivers will require more direct honesty about some of the trade-offs that need to be made.

In particular, we need to be far more honest with the public about the trade-off between maximising access to the single market—that is not the same thing as retaining membership of the single membership—so that we can enjoy as many of the benefits of those trading relationships that we currently enjoy, and the posture we adopt towards future EU workers wishing to come to this country. We had a good discussion earlier today about the offer being made to EU citizens currently living here, and we debated it at some length. Again, the point needs to be made that, despite the acknowledgment that clearly important details have yet to be resolved, we have the outlines of a deal with the European Union, which is a big step forward. If we carry the same spirit of pragmatism and generosity that has informed that offer into our negotiations on future EU workers, while also keeping an eye on the economic importance of people coming from overseas to work in this country—we do not debate that enough—there is a deal to be done that will give us a good chance of maximising trading access to the single market and protecting our economic interests as far as possible.

Over the past year I have looked at different economic sectors and asked myself which group of EU workers, whether in the NHS, the road haulage industry or our agri-food sector, should not be here in a post-Brexit scenario. The truth is that one cannot put one's finger on any significant group of EU workers currently here and contributing to our economy about whom we would say, "It would be better for this country if they weren't here, and actually we should design a Brexit that will stop them coming here."

By focusing on our economic interests and being honest with the public—there is a particular challenge on my side of the House to us to debate this with our constituents in a more direct and honest way than we have perhaps been willing to do in recent years—I think we can move some of the opinion in the country that undoubtedly opted for Brexit a year ago because people thought that that was the change button for reducing immigration. The truth is that it is not, and we need to be honest about that.

I am optimistic, having listened to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State, that there is a pragmatic and sensible centre ground that can emerge and around which we can

coalesce, that will command the support of the business community—which at the moment feels that its voice needs to be louder in the Brexit discussions—and trade unions, and will reassure British workers and give us the best possible chance of enhancing, not diminishing, our prosperity in the years ahead.

7.39 pm

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Secretary of State was characteristically confident about the Brexit negotiations when he spoke, but even he would recognise that things are rather different now. Following recent events, the Prime Minister is clearly weaker than she expected to be, and the EU is stronger than many thought it would be. The non-appearance of the “row of the summer”, referred to a moment ago, reminded us all about who is actually in control of these negotiations as we listen to the ever-insistent ticking of the article 50 clock.

In her speech on Wednesday, the Prime Minister promised that she would seek to “build a wide consensus” on Brexit. The words sound good, and our divided nation certainly does need to come together on this great matter. But let us be frank—the last 12 months have been spent doing anything but forging a consensus. Quite the contrary: we got no running commentary when people asked about the Government’s negotiating objectives; it took a recommendation of the Brexit Select Committee to get the Government to publish a White Paper; there was resistance to the need for transitional arrangements, although now almost everyone recognises that these will be necessary; and there was an initial reluctance to concede that Parliament will have the final say on any deal. I would like to think that this new commitment has come because Ministers have reflected on their behaviour and listened, but I suspect that it has much more to do with the outcome of the general election and the chaos that has ensued.

Like my right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Secretary of State, I cannot understand why we continue to hear the argument that the Government would be prepared to leave the EU with no deal, given that we now know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not agree with that proposition. He made that absolutely clear in his interview a week ago, when he talked about leaving with no deal as

“a very, very bad outcome for Britain”.

He is right. I gently say to Ministers that the chances of this Parliament’s agreeing to leave the European Union with no deal have melted away, along with the Government’s majority. The question is how this consensus can be built. I echo what the right hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb) said a moment ago.

I welcome the greater detail announced today on EU nationals, although the families affected still need answers to questions, including about what the new simplified system will look like, the cut-off date and how family members, including children, could join them. Earlier, the Prime Minister said:

“After the UK has left the European Union, EU citizens with settled status will be able to bring family members from overseas on the same terms as British nationals.”

In responding, will the Foreign Secretary confirm that in such cases, after March 2019, that will involve meeting an income threshold? That is what British citizens currently

face. On the oversight of the arrangements and the rights of UK nationals, which we must of course protect, I personally think that a court made up of UK and European judges would be a very sensible way forward.

But let us be clear—the issue of EU and UK nationals is meant to be the simplest, to be sorted out at the start of the negotiations, compared with all the fundamental questions so important to the future of our economy and our country: our trading relationship with the EU; access to the single market; how we will ensure that we continue to have the skills we need for economic growth; public services and the tax revenue that we need to pay for those services; the future of co-operation on foreign policy, defence, security, the fight against terrorism and science and research. On that latter issue, I do not understand Ministers’ reluctance simply to say that they wish to remain part of the Horizon 2020 programme.

Given that the Government’s central aim—indeed, it is the aim of the Opposition—is to maintain tariff-free and barrier-free trade, I also do not understand why the Government have turned their backs on the simplest means of achieving that, which is to remain within the customs union, especially as that would solve the problem of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Perhaps the Government have chosen this path because in practice they know that Britain will probably remain a member of the customs union for some time to come. The Chancellor’s speech at the Mansion House gave a strong indication of that.

No one I have met, Ministers apart, believes that negotiating a new trade and market access agreement will be completed between now and next October. The best that we can look to is an agreement in principle to negotiate such a deal and then transitional arrangements that will cover the period from the end of March 2019 to the conclusion of these negotiations. In the meantime, as the Secretary of State knows, all this uncertainty is profoundly bad for business confidence, as is talking about leaving with no deal.

On the great repeal Bill, Parliament faces a huge practical task in transposing the regulations and decisions, but Ministers need to understand, in the spirit of the new consensus, that the House will enable that to happen only as long as it is crystal clear that no attempt will be made to remove, erode or undermine any of the workers’ rights, consumer protection or environmental standards that the British people have come to value.

Despite what the Prime Minister said, we have to be honest and recognise that there is not currently a consensus on the type of Brexit that we should seek, so the Prime Minister’s commitment will have to be given form through the Government’s actions. I urge Ministers to start demonstrating this new approach to the House, the British people and British businesses. I urge them to listen to the voices of the many and not just those who shouted loudest for leave during the referendum. I urge them to be flexible in their approach. Since we all want tariff-free and barrier-free trade, why do they not at the very least leave the prospect of remaining in the customs union on table, given that the Secretary of State—with, as he described it, his characteristic honesty—said on Sunday he is pretty sure but not certain that he will get the deal that he wants? I also urge Ministers to understand that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Secretary of State said so eloquently, if their confidence is misplaced, the unhappiness—indeed, the anger—that

[*Hilary Benn*]

gave rise to the referendum result will return as people discover that the things that they were promised fail to materialise.

If Ministers do all the things I have mentioned, we may find a way forward. If they do not, this Parliament, be it long or short, is going to be very hard work for them. That is not where we should want to be, given the scale of the task that we face as a country as we all seek to get the best deal that we can on behalf of all the people who so recently sent us here.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir David Amess):** Order. Unfortunately, I now have to drop the time limit to four minutes.

7.47 pm

**Suella Fernandes (Fareham) (Con):** Our great country is about to embark on a journey of national self-determination, rediscovering and building our identity as a great trading nation, an outward-looking nation and a nation that has every reason to be confident in its future. The Government have rightly rejected staying in the customs union and the single market. If we are to realise our aspiration of becoming a self-governing, global-facing democracy, we cannot remain signed up to the single market or customs union.

Contrast the Government's position with what we have heard from the shadow Secretary of State today: confusion and an illogical position, as he stated that membership of the customs union remains on the table. Contrast that with what the shadow Attorney General said this weekend: we will not necessarily be able to control our immigration policy. But that was what people voted for last year. If Brexit is to mean anything, it must mean control of our borders, our immigration policy and our trade.

Why has the customs union not served our purposes? There are four main reasons. First, it has not served our country's trade interests. The EU has a laughable track record on securing trade agreements with the more flourishing parts of the world. Since 1999, our trade deficit with the EU has grown from £12 billion to £71 billion. That is in contrast to our growing trade surplus with the rest of the world—we have gone from a deficit of £4 billion in 1999 to a surplus of £34 billion in 2016. There is therefore an amazing opportunity for our country to forge trade links with the rest of the world, rather than being reliant on the declining market of the EU.

We will be able to strike new trade deals only if we are out of the customs union. The alternative is impossible because of the common commercial policy, which binds all its members. The Labour manifesto says that it wants to

“work with global trading partners to develop ‘best-in-class’ free trade and investment agreements that remove trade barriers and promote skilled jobs and high standards”,

but that is simply not possible as long as we are members of the customs union.

Secondly, EU protectionism harms British consumers. We are denied products such as cheaper sugar from developing states because protectionist tariffs favour

less efficient farmers in northern Europe. The EU customs union has pushed up the price of food and clothes by an estimated £500 a year for each household. By opening the market and lowering barriers to entry for new competition, prices will fall and consumers will benefit. Choice and quality will increase as producers will no longer have a captive market or a monopoly.

Thirdly, the EU's trade agreements have focused too much on goods. When 80% of our GDP is from services, we need to realign our trade policy. Lastly, the customs union severely penalises farmers and workers in developing countries when they export to the EU. The tariffs are unequal and discriminatory, and that really is an enemy of fair trade. If we want to, we can develop more opportunities to support African countries to become more sustainable and to industrialise.

In conclusion, Brexit is not a crisis to manage, as the Opposition would have us believe. It is a golden opportunity for us to seize. I implore them to get behind the Government and support Brexit in all its forms.

7.50 pm

**Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab):** This Queen's Speech is not a plan for a Government at the height of their powers with a refreshed mandate. It is a legislative programme for a Government in a holding pattern, led by an isolated and humiliated Prime Minister who has been shorn of her authority after a bruising encounter with the electorate in an election that she chose to call three years early. She flunked the test spectacularly, hobbling her premiership, and weakening rather than strengthening her hand in the EU negotiations in the process. Far from gaining the landslide victory that the polls indicated would be hers when she called the election, the Prime Minister has managed to turn a Tory majority into a hung Parliament. Her much vaunted deal with the DUP has only just been concluded in the nick of time, 18 days after the general election. Meanwhile, No. 10 is beginning to resemble the *Mary Celeste*.

Anyone who doubts the truth of the Prime Minister's predicament need only peruse the weekend's front pages to see the unseemly jockeying for position that has already begun in this most weak and wobbly of Administrations. The programme is defined more by what has been missed out than by what it actually contains. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out in his speech that the Tory election manifesto has disappeared in its entirety from the party's website. That gives us an insight into the real motivation for the Government introducing a new right to be forgotten in the data protection Bill.

There is no mention in the Queen's Speech of the triple lock on pensions or the abolition of winter fuel payments. The Prime Minister's highly divisive personal pet project—introducing new grammar schools—is not referred to, nor is the possibility of allowing a free vote on fox hunting any time soon. The dementia tax proposals have gone, as have the police cuts.

The election result destroyed any mandate for an extreme Brexit. Parties holding extreme positions on Brexit—whether the UK Independence party or the Liberal Democrats—were rejected emphatically. For the first time in decades, the Tories and Labour together received 80% of the votes. There is no appetite for the hard Brexit that the Prime Minister has tried to pursue since the referendum. She interpreted the decision in the

referendum as giving the Government alone the power to decide how to proceed. The Supreme Court rightly interpreted the constitutional reality and disabused her of that vanity. She then asked voters to give her a free hand to drive through her own personal hard Brexit, and the British people disabused her of that vanity.

Two things must now happen. First, we need a cross-party council, comprising expertise and experience, to advise the Government on how to progress. Scrutiny benefits from a plurality of opinion. Good decisions require managed dissent. Secondly, the Brexit council should work out what a baseline acceptable deal would be and put that in place. That deal might look something like the Norwegian model—that is, to agree to Britain entering the European economic area. We could then work out which incremental elements we need to get a deal to strengthen that base. Working from a baseline, we can build a genuinely successful deal with the best chance of safeguarding jobs and building prosperity for the future.

7.54 pm

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): This is a defining Parliament for Britain's place in Europe and in the world, and Parliament will fail in its duty if it does not preside over the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, and doing so in as good order as our 27 partners and negotiators enable. This entails the historic amount of legislative activity announced in the Queen's Speech to convert the *acquis communautaire* into UK law. Much of the work will be detailed and technical, and it is important that we get it right, but hopefully it will not be controversial. However, the diplomatic activity that we undertake in the coming months and years will be important for Britain's future and must not play second fiddle to our legislative challenge.

I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech that Ministers will ensure that the UK's leading role on the world stage is maintained and enhanced as it leaves the European Union. Few in this House, regardless of their position on the referendum question that we resolved a year ago, want the United Kingdom to be anything other than open and internationalist in its outlook. Now more than ever, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will have a central role in maintaining our networks and alliances, and in developing our political, security and economic ties around the world.

In the previous Parliament, the Foreign Affairs Committee, which I chaired, as I hope to do again in this Parliament, repeatedly called for the FCO's capacity to be boosted. Immediately after the referendum, we reported that there was an urgent need substantially to increase

“the funding available to the FCO commensurate with the enormity of the task it now faces.”

Since then, the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Department for International Trade have been created, but the diplomatic task required in all European capitals and beyond will outlast the withdrawal process and is discrete from the trade agenda. I reiterate that just protecting the FCO budget is wholly inadequate for the task in hand.

Events will continue to develop with serious consequences for our interests. The current crisis in the Gulf and the potential for a hot or protracted cold war on the Arabian peninsula threaten the stability and prosperity of key British partners and have undermined the effectiveness

of the Gulf Co-operation Council. There are calls for the United Kingdom to play a role as a third party in the implementation and monitoring of any future agreement. We should do so, particularly by offering our expertise in auditing any counter-terror financing measures, and indeed on what the ground rules might be for political Islamists to take part in developing democracies. That would be in the interest of all parties. It is vital that we are ready and properly resourced to carry out such work if requested.

Inevitably, I would like to be able to say much more in this debate about: our current operations in Syria; the future of liberated territory in Iraq and Syria; the authorisation of the use of force; a new sanctions regime as we leave the European Union; our involvement in the European Union's future common foreign and security policy, and common security and defence policy; and, importantly, possible Brexit transition options. Finally, I want to make the point that 2020 would be a suitable date for the state visit of President Trump, which was notably omitted from the Queen's Speech. I regret that people will now have to look at my website to see the full text of the remarks I had hoped to make in this debate.

7.58 pm

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): This Queen's Speech shows the extent to which Brexit will dominate our legislative agenda. We have the repeal Bill, and Bills on trade, customs, fisheries, agriculture and more. No matter what outside events may say, we now have a single-purpose Government and a single-purpose legislative programme. The Prime Minister called the election because she said that she could not get Brexit through Parliament. How ruefully she must reflect on that statement now. Before she said that, the article 50 Bill had gone through this House with a majority of 372 votes. The other place had not tried to block it. Given that that legislation went through, the election was never called because Parliament was blocking Brexit. It was called because the Government wanted to cash in on big opinion poll leads.

The backfiring of that political gamble has left the Prime Minister leading a minority Government, dependent on the deal with the DUP that was announced today, at an immediate cost of £1.5 billion. When I was a child, we had a programme on television called “The Six Million Dollar Man”. I thought that that was a lot of money at the time, but the DUP has guaranteed far more than that for each of its representatives in this House. We enter the most important negotiations the country has conducted since the war weakened, not strengthened, with the authority of the Prime Minister shot to pieces, her Cabinet divided and her position sustained by nothing other than fear of another election.

As these negotiations begin, we are reminded of a salutary fact. We have discussed Brexit far too often in the past year as though it was something Tory Ministers could define—we have heard that it would mean this, it would mean that and it would mean the next thing—but this is actually a negotiation between the two parties around the table; it is not a Tory wish list.

When the Secretary of State was asked yesterday what he thought of Mr Barnier, he gave an insight into the level of preparation undertaken when he said, “He's very French.” With that level of preparation, it is perhaps no

[Mr Pat McFadden]

wonder that the first demand, repeated four times in the article 50 letter—that the future trade negotiations take place alongside the article 50 negotiations—did not survive the first meeting on the first day. That reminds us that this is a negotiation between two parties, not a Tory wish list.

In substance, what does that really boil down to after the election? As other colleagues have said, the thing that should go is this mantra that no deal is better than a bad deal. No deal would be damaging for the European Union, but as the past and perhaps future Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee said, it would, relatively speaking, damage us more. We know the consequences: tariffs on cars and bigger tariffs on agricultural produce. It would make it impossible to have no hard border, at least in economic terms, between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is, in relative terms, a gun held to our heads, not to the European Union's head.

Ultimately, this negotiation will come down to a choice for the Prime Minister: will she do as the Chancellor wants and put economic interests first, or will she put the hard Brexiters first? In other words, will it be the national interest first or nationalism first? That is ultimately the choice that faces us.

8.2 pm

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): It is a great honour and pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden). I agree with much of what he said and, indeed, with the excellent speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb). As ever, I also endorse much of what was said by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn).

People right across this House, and indeed this country, have to be utterly realistic and honest about this and accept that everything has now changed. In my constituency, I found very few angry remainers—I know there are many angry remainers, but it tends to be a London-based thing, and the results in London for the Conservative party say it all. However, in my constituency, there are very few angry remainers. What there is is an acceptance of the result and almost a sense of resignation—it is not agreement, and it is not a welcome. That is especially true of constituents who run their own businesses, who did not welcome the result and who do not welcome the fact that we are leaving the European Union. However, people have accepted the referendum result, and their message and their plea now is that we should come together and get the best deal we can in the national interest.

That is why I am so pleased that we are already seeing changes in the approach being taken, and many other hon. and right hon. Members have expressed that view. I repeat much of what was said from the Opposition Front Bench about the need to change the tone. Those on the Government Front Bench need to wake up and understand that things have now changed. The rhetoric has to be dropped. The slogan that no deal is better than a bad deal is nonsense, and it has always been nonsense. The British people know that, and that is why they voted as they did on 8 June.

Nobody likes somebody being very smart, but I am going to have to say this: I stood up in this place—on this spot—on two occasions, and I warned hon. and right hon. Friends of the dangers of ignoring the 48%,

and the young in particular. The expression I used was that many young people who voted remain believe an older generation have stolen their future, and the result was there on 8 June. I hate to have been proved right, but I was. Look at the demographics of the results; they almost mirror those from the referendum. The older people were, the more likely they were to have voted Conservative; the younger ones—obviously, in my terms, that is anybody under the age of about 50—did not. More people under the age of 45 voted Labour in the election.

Of course it is profoundly ironic that people who voted remain then voted for the Labour party and the Leader of the Opposition—a man who gave remain a very lukewarm seven and a half out of 10. If I may say so, Opposition Members, too, now have to wake up and accept the reality of the situation, because they have promised many of these people things they may not be able to deliver on. When they talk about the customs union, the single market and immigration, they now have to say what they mean, and they should stop being cowards about it: if they think they want the benefits of the customs union, they should have the—I nearly said a very unparliamentary word—courage to stand up and say that. They should make the case, and make the argument, just as we now need to make the case and make the argument about the benefits of immigration.

Finally, this is a great country. We still have a very good economy. We have a great and bright future. That is not because we are leaving the European Union, but despite it. We now need to make sure we have the education and training to seize those opportunities.

8.7 pm

**Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to make my maiden speech today.

It is a privilege for me to follow Craig Williams as the Member for Cardiff North. I know how hard Craig worked to represent the constituency over the past two years.

The recent election campaign was punctured by a number of tragic events, from Manchester to London. In Wales, there was another sad event, which brought together the nation. The loss of our former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, was felt in homes across Wales. Some may remember his time here representing Cardiff West, as well as his wife, Julie Morgan, who represented Cardiff North, and who still represents the constituency in the National Assembly. Julie and Rhodri were a team for over half a century. Rhodri was always a close friend and wise counsel. He is much missed, and I am sure Members will join me in extending our love and sympathy to Julie and the family.

The history of the modern Cardiff North is a history of how industry and people changed and revolutionised the city and the whole of south Wales. But it is industry that has defined the modern part of the capital that I represent. It was the wealth created by the traditional industries of south Wales that created the gothic splendour of Castell Coch, and it was this same industry that brought people to create Cardiff and that led to the growth of Whitchurch, Rhiwbina, Llanishen, Pontprennau, Heath and Llandaff North, to name only a few of its communities.

That industry also created a cosmopolitan, multicultural city that is home to Cardiff's first Welsh-medium secondary school—a school where my daughter learns through

the medium of a language that is growing and that will be spoken by 1 million people in the coming decades.

It is the people of Cardiff who voted to remain in the European Union. The vote in many parts of Wales was not a vote against Europe or the concept or the reality of the European Union; it was a vote against politics—against the reality of the decisions taken here. The cumulative impact of benefit cuts and reductions in public spending has hit the poorest hardest, so I intend to use my time here to speak up against a failed austerity where the richest people have forced the poorest people to pay the price. The UK Government seem to have abandoned austerity for Northern Ireland today: what about the rest of the UK? The UK is weaker and less united this evening than it was this morning. I also hope the UK Government understand that it is important that the whole of the UK is represented in these talks and negotiations. At present, the UK Government are in danger of losing the argument not only in Brussels but in Cardiff as well, with a disunited kingdom where jobs and livelihoods, workers' rights and action on climate change are sacrificed in the pursuit of an impossible imperialist fantasy.

During the business statement last week, Mr Deputy Speaker, you were kind enough to allow me to raise the issue of the loss of over 1,000 jobs in my constituency because of the closure of a Tesco customer care centre, and I am grateful. Since then, I have had the opportunity to spend time with and speak to many of the workers who have been told they have lost their jobs. They are devastated; many have two or three members of the same family working there. Over the weekend, one of them wrote to me. Her words speak for everyone affected there. "Please fight for us", she said, continuing:

"Each and every single one of those 1,100 people are heartbroken and terrified as we face uncertain futures for ourselves and our families. Anything you can do, anything at all—we all will be forever grateful".

Those are her words, not mine, and they are a challenge to us all. It is those people and their voices that are in my mind today and will be guiding me.

My fear is that if this Government are allowed to drive through a Brexit where the jobs and livelihoods of the people we all represent are treated with disdain and indifference, then these will be the stories we hear every day, every week, and every month. I intend to use my time to stand up against failed austerity measures and for a more prosperous, fairer and more equal society. I look forward to working with my colleagues here. Thank you.

8.11 pm

**Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) for her contribution today. It is a pleasure to follow her, and to thank her for her kind and generous remarks about her predecessor, Craig Williams. I am sure that we all wish her every personal success serving in the House of Commons.

As the UK leaves the European Union, the British people and Parliament will again have the right to make our own decisions in our own national interest. With our freedom restored, our nation will boldly make its own way in the world just as our forebears did throughout the centuries. The benefits of trade and the sharing of

culture should not require the United Kingdom to be locked into a political union. On the contrary, upholding every essence of our sovereignty and democracy is what the people of these islands have fought for for nearly 1,000 years. The measures outlined in the Queen's Speech will lay the foundations for a better future for all parts of our nation. All of us must now accept that the ultimate ambitions of the European Union do not run with the grain of the British people; our historical development and approach have always been different. Our energies must now surely be focused on working to construct a new British-European bilateral relationship that I certainly believe is not only possible but will eventually prove to be the right path for our nation.

Our future lies, as it always has, beyond the shores of Europe, with the rest of the world, and particularly the Commonwealth and the English-speaking nations. I speak as co-chairman of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly when I say that the very special and enduring relationship between the people of the United Kingdom and Ireland must be secured in any new arrangements—most particularly, the common travel area and access for trade, hopefully unfettered, across the two borders. It is possible to be outside the European Union and at the same time have beneficial bilateral relations without compromising sovereignty, as our Crown dependencies of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man have demonstrated, and Her Majesty's Government have a responsibility to defend and secure their rights and interests. The same applies to the subjects of the British overseas territories who depend on the United Kingdom to look after their wellbeing, and we have a duty to defend their rights as well.

However, the people of Gibraltar are, I have to say, rightly nervous at this time. I welcome the announcement that His Majesty the King and the Queen of Spain will soon come to the United Kingdom on a state visit, but there was nothing in our Queen's Speech that gave any public reassurances that Gibraltar's economy and sovereignty will be safeguarded. I therefore call on Her Majesty's Government to do just that. We must never let down the people of the Rock, who have time and again demonstrated their undying loyalty to the British Crown and the United Kingdom.

Let us embrace the fortunes that this historic moment offers by securing an agreement that exemplifies the bold ambition of our nation to be a great economic and cultural centre of the world again. This is what the British people expect of Her Majesty's Government, so let us all unite behind that great vision for our United Kingdom.

8.16 pm

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell), who ended on the subject of Gibraltar. I am glad that he did so, because I want to highlight the fact that there is a major problem with not only Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic but with what will happen to Gibraltar. It is quite possible that there will be a real problem getting any agreement because of disagreement with Spain over Gibraltar. The Government of Gibraltar interpret clause 24 of the guideline document produced by President Donald Tusk of the European Council as potentially leaving their position uncertain and unsettled after any deal. The question will be whether the British

[Mike Gapes]

Government are prepared, in order to get an agreement, to sell out Gibraltar and its interests, or, if they do get an agreement, whether it will be worth anything after we have left the EU, when we will no longer be able, within the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, or through other measures, to protect the interests of Gibraltar, and when there will be a member state in the EU that has another agenda. Similar issues would apply elsewhere, but Gibraltar is a fundamental sticking point and problem in these negotiations. The Foreign Secretary and the British Government need to come clean and state publicly what their position will be.

We have heard reference to the state visit by the King of Spain but there was of course no reference to the state visit of President Trump. I draw attention to the early-day motion that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) and I, and others, tabled on this issue. If the British Government are serious about being honest and open, they should say now whether the hand-holding is over, and whether President Trump will be welcomed here this year as was originally intended or his visit is put off indefinitely. The former Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt), said that it should perhaps take place in 2020. I suggest that it would best take place after the presidential election in which Donald Trump's successor has been elected, during the period in November to December before the inauguration of his successor.

**Crispin Blunt** *rose*—

**Mike Gapes:** In the interests of others, it is not fair that I take an intervention.

As other Members have said, there is a fundamental problem in the Government's approach: our country will be poorer, weaker and less influential on the world stage if we leave the European Union. We have seen, in the past few days, a vote at the General Assembly of the United Nations relating to the Chagos islands and Mauritius where EU countries did not line up alongside the UK. That is pretty unprecedented. Usually, EU countries work collectively in the General Assembly to defend each other's interests. That did not happen and we will see a lot more of that in the future. I pledge to fight this hard Brexit and I will do so throughout this Parliament.

8.20 pm

**Andrew Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes).

It is an incredibly humbling experience to have been elected to this place. I hope that, however long or short my time here may be, I will be able to serve West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine with the same dedication and purpose as my predecessor, Stuart Donaldson, did for two years.

I am fully aware that I walk in august footsteps: Sir Robert Smith held the seat for 18 years; George Kynoch sat here and represented the equivalent seat of Kincardine and Deeside for five years; and, of course, the still much respected and fondly remembered Sir Alick Buchanan-Smith held Kincardine and Deeside and,

before that, Angus North and Mearns from 1964 until his death in 1991. That was 27 years, and I am only on day 18.

Members will, I am sure, get fed up with my 12—yes, 12—Scottish Conservative colleagues insisting that their patch of God's own country is the most beautiful in the entire UK. Although I do, of course, sympathise with them, it is quite clear that the most beautiful, unique, attractive and downright brilliant constituency in the entire country is West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine—from the Cairngorms National Park around Braemar, down through the Dee Valley and Royal Deeside, to Ballater, Aboyne and Banchory, skirting the edge of the granite city itself, taking in Blackburn, Westhill, the subsea capital of Europe, and down to the North sea coast at Portlethen and north Kincardine. There is also the picturesque, pastoral Donside, Corgarff, Strathdon, Alford and Kemnay. Stonehaven and the villages in Howe of the Mearns were made famous, of course, by Lewis Grassic Gibbon in what was the favourite novel of my grandfather, an English teacher, "Sunset Song".

In the old rhyme,

"the twa peaks you can see frae the sea, Clachnaben and Bennachie", are both in West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, although I should admit to having to share the latter with my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Colin Clark).

What other seat has such history? I could—but I will not, because time will not permit it—tell the gripping tale of how the Honours of Scotland were smuggled out of Dunnottar castle in a creel basket by a minister's wife, to save them from the clutches of the marauding army of Oliver Cromwell; or of the romantic but ultimately doomed 1715 Jacobite rebellion, which began at Braemar with the raising of the standard of James VIII and III; or of Victoria, Albert, John Brown and how Deeside became Royal Deeside; or of the Monymusk reliquary, thought to be 1,300 years old and which held the bones of St Columba and was carried in front of the victorious Scottish army at Bannockburn. I could tell those tales, but I will not.

It would, of course, be entirely remiss of me to speak today without mentioning how I, in West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, now have the immense honour of representing Balmoral castle. In fact, as Members from Scotland will be aware, the residence in the north-east of Scotland is now represented by a Conservative not only in this place, but in the Scottish Parliament by my friend and colleague Alexander Burnett. With Ruth Davidson herself representing Holyrood palace in Edinburgh, Her Majesty will, I am sure, be delighted to know that she now has three elected Conservative representatives on whom she can call. It is an honour to represent Balmoral, even when, if canvassing, it is an extremely long drive to walk up only to find that the resident is not on the electoral roll.

I have 33 seconds left, so I will canter through the rest of my speech. Today we continue to debate the Queen's Speech, specifically how it relates to Brexit and foreign affairs. The speech last week stated that a Bill would be introduced to repeal the European Communities Act 1972 and provide certainty for individuals and businesses.

Last Thursday I attended the royal highland show in Ingliston. I met many farmers, including from West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine. In between lamenting how appallingly poor the Scottish National party has

been at managing the common agricultural policy system north of the border, they wanted to make one thing abundantly clear. What farmers and all in the agriculture sector require—what they need now more than anything else—is certainty and stability in our country and our economy, and a clear way ahead so that they can plan and grow their businesses, not just for the next five years, but for the next 10, 15 and 20 years.

What the farming sector and, indeed, this country do not need is further uncertainty in the shape of another referendum on Europe or another general election, and they certainly do not need another referendum on Scottish independence. Why not all come together, in the national interest of the United Kingdom, and support the Government this week? That is what my constituents need me to do, and that is what I will do.

8.24 pm

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Diolch yn fawr iawn, Mr Dirprwy Lefarydd. I congratulate the hon. Members for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) and for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie) on their maiden speeches.

This will obviously be one of dozens of debates on Brexit during this Parliament, and the brevity of the Queen's Speech is evidence that the plethora of necessary Brexit legislation is already detracting from the day job of governing. It will also undoubtedly detract from our ability in this place to debate and address vital issues that will continue none the less to affect people's lives, regardless of Brexit. I propose that the suggested Brexit legislation even fails to respect the interests of this House, the constitutional framework of our country and the concerns of real people, and it is on that that I will focus my comments.

As the Government have now acknowledged, they do not want to create even more uncertainty and risk derailing the Brexit negotiations further. They must respect all of the opinions represented in the House, from all of the UK's nations. In the Queen's Speech, the Government committed to working with devolved Administrations, as well as others, to build the widest possible consensus on the country's future outside the European Union. For a decision of that magnitude, which affects almost every aspect of the way in which we live our lives and will affect generations to come, that process and approach seem eminently sensible. The four-nation approach is what Plaid Cymru has insisted on since the beginning.

I note, however, that there was not a single piece of proposed legislation in the two-year Queen's Speech that specifically delivers for Wales. In actuality, the proposed Brexit legislation seeks to take power away from Wales, shredding our constitutional settlement. Pursuant to the Sewel convention, the UK Government have a duty to gain the consent of all the devolved Administrations before legislating on a matter that is already devolved. As powers are repatriated to Westminster from Brussels through the repeal Bill, those powers that sit within the framework of the National Assembly for Wales must be presented to the Welsh Assembly to be decided on. The democratic voice of Wales should not and will not be weakened by Westminster.

It is vital that the National Assembly for Wales is provided with the right to give or withhold its consent in relation to legislation that is so central to its constitutional

position and to the future of our country. Wales has unique needs during the Brexit process and beyond. Our economy, agriculture, funding and public services are our own, and it must be up to us to decide how they are governed outside of the European Union. A real four-nation approach to our exit from the European Union means genuine input and tangible representation from the devolved nations.

I noted the Secretary of State's commitment earlier to seek the consent of the national Parliaments of the UK on the repeal Bill, but I make it clear to him that Plaid Cymru will not support any legislation that hordes powers, taking them from our devolved areas and back to Westminster. Will he publish full details of how each UK country will be involved? Will he also confirm that he will ensure the support of all the four nations before signing the final exit deal with the European Union?

8.28 pm

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts).

I welcome the fact that most of the legislation in the Gracious Speech was devoted to equipping our country for its departure from the EU and to the forging of a new place for us in the world. I am proud that the Government are fully committed to delivering on the will of the British people, so that our laws may now be made in Westminster, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff.

We can no longer doubt the instructions given to us by the electorate. The Secretary of State rightly spoke of the 52% who voted to leave the EU last June and the more than 85% who voted for Brexit parties at the election. There are, of course, lessons that the Government urgently need to learn from the outcome of the election, but one thing I hope we can all take away is a commonality of purpose on the part of all Members across the House who were elected to this place on a manifesto pledging to make Brexit a success. We must deliver on that because, with two successive mandates for leaving the EU in under a year, the damage that would be done to the reputation of elected politicians if we were seen to undermine the electorate's wishes would be severe.

It is no secret that the current parliamentary arithmetic is not what I wanted to see in the wake of the general election, but the Conservatives are the largest party by a considerable margin. However much the Leader of the Opposition defied expectations on 8 June and however much he might preach this to the crowds at Glastonbury, he did not win and is in no position to form a Government. It falls to the Prime Minister and her team to take to the negotiating table and make Brexit a success.

Given the Parliament the people have chosen for us, I refer once again to the commonality of purpose I spoke of earlier. If we are to make Brexit work for all our citizens, whether they voted for the Conservatives, Labour or any other party, we need to show a united front in this House and give the Brexit team the backing they need. I am not saying at all that Members across the House should desist from offering the Government constructive criticism at this most vital of times, but a Parliament that offers opposition for opposition's sake, rather than well intentioned advice is one that will undermine our position in the eyes of our interlocutors and harm the negotiation process.

[*Nadhim Zahawi*]

If Members will not take it from me, I invite them to listen to the comments made by the former EU commissioner and ardent remainer, Lord Hill, before the Foreign Affairs Committee in the last Parliament. He said that the best chance we have in these negotiations is if we show a united front and band together around the Prime Minister. So I put it to the House: do right hon. and hon. Members care more about opposing the Prime Minister and her team, whatever they do, than about pulling together to ensure there is a successful Brexit deal? For me, the priority will always be a successful Brexit, so I hope that as many colleagues as possible join me in refraining from undermining the negotiations in the hope of short-term political point scoring and get behind our team.

8.32 pm

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to give my maiden speech.

Being elected as the Member of Parliament for my home constituency of Bristol North West is deeply humbling. It is humbling for me personally, as a working-class kid from a council estate in Lawrence Weston in my constituency. To be able to speak here on behalf of my friends, my family, my community and, indeed, my country is a great honour.

Let me pay tribute to my predecessor, Charlotte Leslie. The Member of Parliament for seven years and a candidate for three further years, Charlotte's decade of local leadership was held in warm regard by my constituents and by me. We thank Charlotte for her public service.

From the earliest evidence of human habitation in these British Isles on the shores of the River Avon near Shirehampton to the eighth-century monastery of Westbury-on-Trym, granted by King Offa of Mercia, to the Roman settlements at Sea Mills and Lawrence Weston, and the Domesday reference to the parish of Henbury, and now, so I am told, to the first ever Darren elected to this House of Commons, Bristol North West is an historic and fascinating constituency.

But the successes of my home and its people, from jobs at the port and advanced manufacturing, to research and development, to the professional services, rely on our trading relationship with the European Union. That is why my first priority during this Brexit Parliament is to fight for Britain's membership of the European single market. Because in times of peace our first priority must be prosperity for all. That is why the politics of holding on to power for power's sake, or political positioning to win internal ideological battles, must stop. We are all here to do what is right for the country. For if that is not the case, I do not know why we are here at all.

So I stand here humbled by my election, with a sense of urgency to tackle a hard Brexit but also with a sense of sadness—sadness because the world feels more fragile than it has in the past, with Britain seen as weak and uncertain in high-risk times, and with fast-paced technological change, shifting geopolitical power, young people frustrated by the country, old people increasingly left alone and public services allowed to slowly die by a thousand cuts.

Politics is hard work, but it is the only forum through which we can provide hope. Whether I am an MP for four months or four years, and whether my actions

bring success or failure to my own political career, I will always put my constituents and my country first. In this mother of Parliaments, let us do all we can to show that a modern and just Britain can rise from the ashes of our current dismay. We are merely shepherds of the nation, standing on the shoulders of giants, tasked with leaving a country to our children that we can be proud of.

This Brexit Parliament will define the future of our country. Let us not self-harm and cause pain, but let us instead unite and act with sense, as well as with patriotism in our hearts, for a national renewal after the dark years of austerity, for the birth of a new British chapter that works for the many, not just the few, and for a new dawn for a new Britain. It is for us now to seize that opportunity and to avoid the risks of failure, but we can do it only by working together in this Brexit Parliament—leavers and remainers—in the national interest.

8.36 pm

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones) on his maiden speech. Like him, I am fortunate to represent my home constituency, which is a great privilege, and I wish him much personal success in his career. As a committed Brexiteer, I will not agree with him on everything, but I would like to discuss an issue on which I feel there is much common ground.

As Members, we all sit here thanks to our constituents engaging in the democratic process and putting their faith in us to represent them in this Chamber. Over the course of this Parliament, however long it might be, we will do our utmost to make our constituents' voices heard, to help fight their battles and to provide reasoned and hopefully enlightening additions to these debates. However, when all is said and done, after our most impassioned efforts and earnest contributions, that may not be enough, and those same constituents who gave us this great privilege may opt to bestow it on someone else. That is right and proper; it is the democratic process working as intended.

I believe, with the Brexit negotiations occurring as we speak, that democracy is our greatest export. My admiration for the principles of democracy that the House upholds—representation, accountability and liberty—is what lies behind my support for our withdrawal from the EU. I am sure that all Members would support those principles and fiercely defend them, but where is the same vigour when it comes to the unelected bureaucrats in Brussels, to whom we have ceded more and more of our sovereignty with each passing year? These unrepresentative bodies are not in the habit of giving back powers once they have taken them, and as recent history has shown, the EU has strived and will continue to strive to become bigger, more centralised and more powerful.

As we begin the process of our withdrawal, it is vital we ensure that whatever deal arises, there is a clean cut from the shackles the EU has attempted to hold us in and that we take back ownership of our laws, leave the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and remove the excessive bureaucracy that has been strangling business here. There has been an endless tide of regulation emanating from Brussels, and it should be no surprise that a one-size-fits-all approach to regulation does not work, as there are 28 different countries, all with differing needs and wants.

Now we have the time and opportunity to design policies tailored to our specific needs and remove rules that are holding Britain back. For example, the agriculture Bill will provide an amazing opportunity to develop our own legislative framework that will provide support for farmers who need it most, incentivise farmers to work in a way that further safeguards the environment, help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the food and farming sector and protect our important rural communities.

Leaving the customs union will create opportunities for relationships with global markets and for trade agreements to be reached. In doing that, it is important that we ensure that our farmers and businesses operate on a level playing field. Brexit presents great opportunities for the growth of global trade. These must be seized with both hands—hands that would otherwise be tied with red tape from the continent.

8.40 pm

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): It is an absolute pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) and also three fantastic maiden speeches, which were powerful, lyrical and passionate, from my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) and for Bristol North West (Darren Jones), and the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie). It is a real honour to follow them all.

As the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) said, when it comes to Brexit, everything has changed. All of us in this place need to recognise that. That is why I greatly regret that the Gracious Speech did not rule out withdrawal without a deal, did not give a categorical guarantee on a parliamentary vote or, indeed, a role for our devolved Administrations, and did not set out transitional arrangements that would give some certainty and guidance to our businesses and all of us in this country. Instead, we get: “Pretty sure we’re going to achieve some sort of deal.” What sort of certainty is that for businesses and all those striving in our economy? The Gracious Speech does not set out proposals to remain in the customs union and the single market, which is what I fervently believe would be best for businesses and the people in my constituency.

Nor does the Gracious Speech set out or respect the competences of our devolved Administrations, as the hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts) said, whether that is to do with their competences under the devolution settlement or with regard to funding the needs of our devolved Administrations. I spoke about this earlier today, but it seems remarkable that the Government can find £1.5 billion and possibly more for Northern Ireland in the DUP deal, yet we in Wales cannot get guarantees of what the funding for Wales will be after Brexit happens. There is great anger in Wales at the deal that has been done today.

The Gracious Speech does not provide categorical protections. We have heard all sorts of mixed answers today about the situation of EU nationals and UK citizens abroad. This matters to the people of Cardiff South and Penarth, particularly all the young people who voted in the recent general election. What will their opportunities be in the future? What will the future be for businesses in my local community? Where will we

get the fairer funding deal for Wales? Will we keep the crucial labour and environmental protections? Will the rights of EU citizens in my constituency—a very diverse constituency—be respected or will those individuals be merely pawns in this game? I welcome all efforts and the cross-party co-operation of those across the House who seek to put this minority Government on the spot on those issues over the weeks and months to come. Everything has indeed changed.

What matters abroad matters for all the people in Cardiff South and Penarth and all of us in this country. I have said it in this House before, and it is not just about Brexit and the future nature of our trading relationships. It is about the family links and concerns of the many diverse communities in my constituency; the care that many show locally for those fleeing conflict and persecution and for the human rights of others around the world; the care that they show on global issues such as climate change; their opposition to the threats posed by extremism and the undermining of our values; and, indeed, the concerns of the many locally with family members who are serving or have served in our armed forces bravely around the world, in many different contexts.

That is why the issues that I intend to raise in this Parliament and in the debate about foreign affairs include the situation in Yemen and our continued sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, helping to fuel that conflict; the situation in Syria, where we must continue the fight against the barbarous Daesh operatives, but also seek to protect civilians; and the situation of Somaliland, a country that has many connections with my constituency. Will Britain and other countries finally recognise Somaliland and also provide crucial support for the upcoming elections later this year? Will we continue our spending commitment of 0.7% on international development? Will we stand up for our principles on climate change and oppose those such as President Trump who would undermine them? Will we do right by our armed forces and support a strong Army, with the right levels of recruitment, the right deal and the right armed forces covenant, which it so fully deserves?

8.44 pm

**Ben Bradley** (Mansfield) (Con): It is a privilege to be able to make my maiden speech and to follow the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty), who spoke with his usual eloquence.

I am honoured and humbled to have been elected by the residents of Mansfield as the constituency’s first ever Conservative Member of Parliament. The seat has been held by Labour since 1923, so that is a huge vote of confidence and faith that I must strive to repay in full over the coming years.

In this my first speech, I must pay tribute to my predecessor, Sir Alan Meale. Sir Alan was the MP for Mansfield for 30 years. That means that he was its MP for longer than I have been alive, which, in itself, is some achievement. As his knighthood would suggest, over those years Sir Alan contributed to many causes, including the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and also played a role in the Blair and Brown Governments. Between them, the last three MPs for Mansfield represented the area for a total of 76 years, and I can only hope to be able to emulate their longevity.

[Ben Bradley]

I am sure that I am not the only new Member sitting on these green Benches to have wondered at some point over the last few weeks how on earth I have ended up here. Looking back, I have realised that after working as a landscape gardener and as a recruiter, I actually found my calling and inspiration—as so many people surely do—in the bin. I was so frustrated by the local council's failure to empty my household bins for a full month because of just one day of snow that I simply had to act. I could not rest until there was action on the issue, so I stood for the council myself. I was duly elected and have been banging on about household waste management ever since to the limited audience who will listen.

Mansfield is an area that has been sustained over centuries by great industry. The first cotton mills and frame-knitting factories sprang up many centuries ago, and many of the landmarks that exist today are named after them. There is the hospital, King's Mill, the football stadium, Field Mill—although it is currently known by a sponsor's name—and many other examples. Legend tells that, in the 12th century, King Henry II got lost in the woods while hunting in Sherwood Forest and found his way to one of the local mills. The miller and his family thought that he looked a clean and decent kind of chap, and offered him a bed for the night. In the morning, when the King finally announced himself, the family dropped to their knees to beg forgiveness for being so familiar. He promptly knighted the miller, there and then. The Sir John Cockle pub now stands as a landmark to that event, and was a favourite haunt of mine during the election campaign—for that purely historical reason!

If the end of the old mills and factories led to unemployment and decline, so did the end of the mining industry through the 1980s and 1990s. Coalmining was the centre of local communities throughout much of the 20th century, not just for work but for all kinds of other support. It is a heritage of which people are rightly proud, and I shall be supporting calls for the creation of a new museum in the town centre to protect that heritage and ensure that future generations know and understand it. The regeneration that the area desperately needs has been slow in coming. Market Warsop no longer has the kind of thriving market that gave the town its name, while empty shops around the town centre are prevalent, and it has taken far too long to revitalise.

Having said all that, I firmly believe that in recent years Mansfield's potential has been heading steeply upwards. Now, huge collectives like Maun Valley Citizens, bringing together schools, churches and countless other groups, are working towards united and shared goals such as reducing homelessness and improving the lives of vulnerable people. Fantastic institutions like West Nottinghamshire College—one of Europe's largest colleges, offering everything from technical and vocational courses to university degrees—are providing opportunities for young people in Mansfield to gain new skills and qualifications, and to improve their prospects for the future.

If I may, I will end where I began—with the election campaign. Of all the many factors that were prevalent on the doorstep during the campaign, the one about which I heard most often was Brexit, and that was why I

chose to make my maiden speech during today's debate. My constituency voted 72% in favour of leaving the EU, and in favour of Britain setting its own course in the years to come. What has been made very clear is that residents of Mansfield simply will not accept any deal that does not involve taking back control of our borders. That is a red line that must not be crossed. It is not about individuals who usually contribute to our society; it is about the sheer weight of numbers, which affects our local services and jobs.

The other key message from the campaign has been that no one has been speaking up for Mansfield down here in Westminster, and banging on the doors of Ministers looking for support. My pledge during the election was to shout up loud and shout up often, and I intend to fulfil that promise.

8.48 pm

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I congratulate all those who have used today's debate to make their maiden speeches. It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Mansfield (Ben Bradley), and I look forward to finding out even more about how the bin collections are going in the months to come.

There has been much discussion about the eight Brexit Bills in the Queen's Speech, but a Bill on environmental protection is conspicuous by its absence. Given the significance of the EU's role in environmental protection, I think that that is a particularly grave omission on the part of the Government's Brexit team. Effective and robust environmental protection relies on well-funded and well-staffed institutions to monitor compliance with environmental law. It also needs powerful regulators and courts to ensure that breaches of the law are challenged and the law is enforced. For the past 40 years, that system of enforcement has been grounded in the legislation and institutions of the EU, notably the Commission and the European Court of Justice. That structure has meant that the UK Government can be held to account for their actions, and there are countless examples of that taking place. For example, since 1981, the Commission has received more than 200 complaints about the UK under the nature directives, thus protecting wildlife and habitats across the country. Let us be under no illusion: it is precisely the threat of fines from Brussels that has finally concentrated the Government's mind on acting on issues such as air pollution. Domestic legislation simply did not go far enough to do that.

It is therefore rather astonishing that, beyond a few offhand comments from Ministers, we currently have no details of how this important system of checks and safeguards for the natural environment will be replaced. We do not yet know if the Government intend to rely on existing regulators to fill the gap, but if they do, let us remember that those agencies have seen their budgets slashed over recent years and their capacity to hold the Government to account has been greatly diminished.

When it comes to the repeal Bill, let us be clear that the process will be a lot more complicated than simply cutting and pasting a whole set of EU legislation into UK law. When the former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs appeared before the Environmental Audit Committee, she acknowledged that fully one third of environmental legislation would be extremely hard to transfer in that way. Moreover, once that material is transferred, it will become effectively unenforceable—

so-called zombie legislation—due to an absence of monitoring and enforcement. Without the Commission and the European Court of Justice, we will not have the necessary legal architecture. People say, “Don’t worry, we’ll rely on the UK courts instead,” but we must recognise that the threshold to access UK courts for judicial review is very high and involves considerable expense. That system will simply not be as effective as the current one.

Let us also be honest about the fact that a small but vocal part of the right wing sees Brexit as an opportunity for mass deregulation. A fight is coming, and it feels particularly necessary given that the new Environment Secretary has previously suggested that we scrap vital EU environmental protections and described one of the centrepieces of that legislation, the habitats directive, as “absurd”. The right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove) also has a track record that involves voting against measures to halt climate change and attempting to wipe the subject from the education curriculum. I hope I will be forgiven for not having much confidence that the environment will be safe in his hands post-Brexit.

That is why the amendment that I have tabled to the address asks for an environmental protection Act. Such an Act would cut through the political ideology on the right and the left that all too often sidelines the environment, and would instead require a long-term evidence-based approach. Crucially, it would do so via primary legislation, thereby guaranteeing a proper degree of parliamentary scrutiny and oversight. No one voted on 23 June last year to scrap our environmental legislation, yet there is a real risk of that happening unless we enshrine it in a new environmental protection Act.

8.52 pm

**Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) and the four superb maiden speeches that we have heard today. I am quite pleased with the progress that the Government are making in the transition from being part of the European Union to leaving it. First, they held the referendum. Then, seeing the right result, they committed to delivering on Brexit. They triggered article 50 and are now setting a clear, strong agenda in the Queen’s Speech.

It is important to reflect that when we had the referendum a year ago, the result was that we should leave the European Union. There was no lack of certainty in that, yet to hear people today, we might almost think that the general election had cancelled out the referendum result. We still need to leave the European Union, yet elements of the political establishment seem to be doing whatever they can, in a kind of war of attrition, to undermine the decision of the British people. It is a deliberate redefining of what Brexit means, and we have seen the invention of the notions of hard and soft Brexit, which never existed before the referendum. There is no such thing.

This reminds me of when the British people voted in the referendum in 1975 to remain in the European Economic Community, which people understood to mean the common market. Since then, year in and year out, more power has been accrued to what is now the European Union, which seems to be on the verge of becoming a united states of Europe. Just as the European

Union’s identity and nature have changed profoundly, the nature of the argument and debate in Britain has also changed, but the decision of the British people has not changed: we should still be leaving the European Union.

However, some people have worked to undermine the views and opinions clearly expressed by the British people. One argument is that people did not know what they were voting for, as though the British people are ignorant. Some people say that it was all about immigration, but that was just one of several different reasons. Despite that, there has been a clear inference that anyone who voted leave is a racist and that people were unable to distinguish between and understand the arguments. So much of why people voted was based on their lived experiences over the past 40 years, not the few weeks of the campaign.

The Queen’s Speech builds on the positive attitude and outlook of the leave campaign. We have a positive vision for the future of the country. We want to go out to the world. We want a fantastic relationship with the European Union, and there is no reason why we cannot have that. However, the continuity remain campaign seems to be a rather depressing place, full of depressing arguments. Other than dumping the Members of the European Parliament, it seems as though it wants no change whatsoever—remain in all but name.

I would like some clarification on the Horizon 2020 programme. We are still part of it and will be part of it until the end, but we need clarification on the successor programme. The British people voted to take back control of our laws, our borders and our money, and that is what we have to deliver.

8.56 pm

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): It is a great privilege to stand here on behalf of Plymouth. Plymouth is my home. It is where I was born and it is where I live. I stand here mindful of the political greats who have contributed not only in this Chamber, but to my city. Nancy Astor, the first woman to take her seat in this Chamber, represented Plymouth, Sutton from 1919 to 1945. Michael Foot represented Plymouth, Devonport from 1945 to 1955, rebuilding our city after its devastation in the second world war. Then there was David Owen and his defection, and Alan Clark and his diaries. More recently there was David Jamieson, Linda Gilroy and Alison Seabek, to whom my city owes a great deal. I have a lot to live up to, but luckily there is a lot to do to get Plymouth its fair share.

I want to thank Oliver Colvile, my predecessor, for his service. Mr Colvile represented Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport for seven years. In that time, he always conducted himself well, with decorum and generosity, describing himself as “jolly Olly”. I am sure that the whole House will join me in wishing Mr Colvile a speedy recovery from his time in hospital since the general election. Many hon. Members will know of his passion for hedgehogs. I hope that someone will pick up the protection of those little prickly creatures, but that will not be me. There was, however, one campaign on which he and I co-operated and worked together. In 2014, we joined forces to campaign for one of the new Type 26 frigates to be named after Britain’s ocean city—an HMS Plymouth—and I intend to continue that campaign.

[Luke Pollard]

As the son of a Devonport-based submariner, I grew up knowing how important strong defence is to my city and our country. Plymouth is home to Devonport, the largest naval base in western Europe, the nation's amphibious assault ships, the submarine and surface fleet re-fit facilities at Devonport dockyard, and the Royal Citadel and the historic home of the Royal Marines at Stonehouse barracks—two bases that are facing closure. With the aircraft carriers coming on stream soon and the enormous demand that they will place on the Royal Navy, with regard to both personnel and escort frigates, it is time for us to think again about how many frigates our nation needs. Brexit and international uncertainty mean that we need a larger Royal Navy. Orders for Type 26 frigates have been cut from 13 to eight, and the new Type 31 frigate is still early in the design stage. The 1997 strategic defence review called for 32 frigates and destroyers. We now have just 19, so I want the Government to increase orders not only for frigates, but for offshore patrol craft. More frigates, modularly constructed and supporting marine engineering and shipbuilding businesses, large and small, in Plymouth, across the south-west and across our nation, are exactly what our country needs.

During the Prime Minister's statement on Grenfell Tower last week, I received the news that tests showed that the cladding on the Mount Wise tower blocks was combustible. I immediately called for the unsafe cladding to be removed, and that will happen. There can be no compromise on safety. I am pleased that we now have cross-party support for that in Plymouth, with the hon. Members for South West Devon (Mr Streeter) and for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) joining me in asking the Government to pay for that emergency work.

Plymouth is one of the UK's great cities, a grand bastion of parliamentary democracy from the Sabbath Day fight during the English civil war on Freedom Fields to the modern day. Plymouth has seen the pilgrim fathers setting sail on the Mayflower, a fleet setting sail to defeat the Spanish armada and Captain Cook setting sail on his voyages, and there are many more examples. As a base for marine research and expertise, we are second to none. That is why I want not only a ministry of maritime affairs to be set up in Plymouth after Brexit, but Plymouth Sound to be designated as the country's first national marine park.

Plymouth's great contribution has not always been matched by us receiving our fair share. The poor deal that we have at the moment as a city is not one that I will accept or vote to cut further. Progress towards Plymouth achieving its fair share has happened, but not quickly enough. It must now up a gear.

9 pm

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard). We have a shared interest in the voyage of the Mayflower, on which I look forward to working together. I like to think of Boston as where it started. Some people would say that Plymouth was merely a stop on the way across the Atlantic, but we can have that debate later.

Brexit defines not only the election we have just endured but the state of my constituency over the past 10 to 15 years. It is right that Brexit is, in large part, the focus

of this Gracious Speech. Thinking back over what has happened to my constituency over that period, we have seen huge changes. In some ways, the agricultural industry has been supercharged by the huge number of new migrant workers and by changes in industrial practice, but we have also seen huge changes to the town of Boston, in particular, and to Lincolnshire as a whole.

Those changes did not come with the democratic consent of my constituents, and the changes placed huge pressure on the public services in my constituency. It is a testament to all previous Members of this House that we did not even have an argument about the benefits of being in the European Union, never mind win it. Now, the fact is that if we were to seek to vote down this Gracious Speech, or indeed to undermine much of its content, we would be undermining democracy itself. I do not say that in a bid to ask people not to oppose it, but, overall, the fact that we are leaving the European Union was not only in the manifestos of both major parties but is very much on the minds of my constituents. Seventy-six per cent. of those constituents turned out to vote in the referendum, with 76% of them voting to leave. We must respect that result as we look to the future.

With that in mind, I pose two questions. First, what will the future of our country outside the European Union mean for the farming industry? That is closely linked to my second question, which is, perhaps unsurprisingly, on what many of my constituents tell me was the No. 1 issue when they voted to leave the European Union: immigration.

I plead that we acknowledge that the process we are going through will, in part, supercharge an ongoing process of mechanisation. I believe that the changing availability of labour will see more and more farmers in my constituency invest in more and more machines that enable them to be infinitely more productive and require less labour, but the fact is that they will require significant amounts of labour in the future. Before being a member of an expanded European Union, we had a successful seasonal agricultural workers scheme, and I hope that that work permit scheme can, in some form, be quickly reconstituted to provide stability for the agricultural industry, just as today we heard the Prime Minister seek to provide stability for the many of my constituents who came from eastern Europe to make their home in Boston and Skegness. I hope that today they find themselves in a better position than they were in earlier this week.

9.5 pm

**Jo Swinson** (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I congratulate the five Members who have made their maiden speeches in this debate: the hon. Members for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard), for Bristol North West (Darren Jones), for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin), for Mansfield (Ben Bradley) and for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie). They spoke with good humour, giving us an insight into everything from the history of their constituencies to the best tourist spots and pubs. I am sure we will agree on some issues and not on others.

One issue on which I particularly agree with the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine is the need not to have a second independence referendum. Although I will disagree with him on many issues in this place, I welcome the fact that the election result in

Scotland means a greater diversity of voices in this place; it is a truer reflection of the diversity of views in Scotland.

It is two years and three months to the day since my last contribution in this House, and I am delighted to be back. In the intervening period, John Nicolson spoke from the Scottish National party Benches for East Dunbartonshire, and although we had profound disagreements on Scotland's place in the UK, I pay tribute to his work, particularly on equality issues—and LGBT rights especially. I know he would share my concerns, as many of my constituents do, about the Conservatives' deal today with the DUP and, in particular, what it might mean for LGBT rights, climate change and women's rights.

At the start of the general election campaign, Brenda from Bristol struck a chord with many when she said that there was “too much politics”. If she had lived in Bearsden or Bishopbriggs, she might have had even more cause to say that, because in the past three years there have been no fewer than seven elections or referendums in Scotland. However, in East Dunbartonshire we still have great enthusiasm; in 2014, we had the spectacular turnout of 91%, with 61% of people voting to keep Scotland in the UK, and two years later 71% voted to remain in the EU. East Dunbartonshire wants a Scotland in the UK and the UK in the EU, and that is what I will advocate as its representative in this House.

Brexit will, of course, be the overarching issue for this Parliament. From my time in government, I can well imagine the treacle of Brexit that civil servants and Ministers will be wading through. There is a real risk—indeed, it is probably a near certainty—that Brexit will divert attention from other important issues. The Government's response to this election result is very disappointing; there is no mandate for that extreme vision of Brexit. Instead of looking at this balanced Parliament and reaching out in a spirit of compromise to try to find genuine cross-party agreement and consensus, the Government are sticking rigidly to their mantra of “No membership of the single market or the customs union.”

Recasting our relationship with the EU throws into sharp relief our relationship with the rest of the world. It is a volatile world and we will discuss in detail the global developments, risks and threats. I do not share the rose-tinted view of the Brexiteers that it is all going to be jolly wonderful, because on the cross-cutting issues of human rights, democracy and climate change it is often our EU partners who most closely share our values. This is the worst possible time to be loosening ties with our European neighbours, as we have a White House so at odds with UK interest. We are forced to roll out the red carpet for President Trump, a man who demonises a whole religion, shows disrespect for others in the words he uses about women and poses a real danger to the world by withdrawing the United States from the Paris climate change agreement. I urge the Government to think again and to look for genuine cross-party consensus as they approach the difficult issues we face.

9.9 pm

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): May I say what a pleasure it is to follow the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) and how lucky we have all been to have listened to so many outstanding maiden

speeches, from Members from all parts of the House? They have all described their constituencies with passion and poetry.

I am also honoured to be returned to this House to represent the people of Witney and west Oxfordshire on whose behalf I pledge to vote in the time ahead. There is a great deal to mention in the Gracious Speech, but, sadly, time will not permit that today. I wish to concentrate on one aspect of the Brexit negotiations. It is a fact of the election that 85% of the people who voted supported parties, which, in their manifestos at least, support withdrawal from the single market and the customs union.

In the brief time available to me, I would like to focus on the important matter of the customs union. It is important to remember how the European Union, which should be a beacon for free trade, operates as a protectionist bloc, and it is that that troubles me the most because I believe in free trade. I do so because of the power that it has for our economy and because of the help that it gives to the poor across the entire world. It is for that reason that we must have independent control of our own trade policy. In that way, we can focus on the great and emerging markets of the world.

Six members of the G20 have already expressed an interest in having talks and a possible free trade agreement with us in the future. They are: Australia, South Korea, India, Brazil, China and our greatest single trading partner, the United States. It is a fact that British trade has been moving away from the European Union for many years to the extent that we now have a trade deficit, particularly with regard to services. Markets worth only \$4.8 trillion have been opened up to the UK by the European Union, but \$35 trillion have been opened up to Switzerland in free trade arrangements. These smaller groups tend to be more favourable to services, and, as we all know, services are a very important part of the UK economy. We are talking about only 68% with the European Union, but up to 90% with these smaller bespoke agreements.

Free trade is not just about the interests of finance—important though that is to the UK economy—but about helping the poorest around the world and in our society, too. It is anticipated that free trade, which is the greatest tool for reducing poverty that history has ever seen, could reduce the annual food bill for people in the United Kingdom by up to £361 per household. That is a prize worth considering. It may be that there is no need to reinvent the wheel. I urge the Government to look around the country and the world to see whether there are existing arrangements that we may be able to accede to. It may well be that the North American Free Trade Agreement or the Trans-Pacific Partnership would welcome a dynamic, outward-looking free trading Britain, and we should seize those opportunities if they are out there.

Although I am very aware of the challenges that exist—in west Oxfordshire, there are challenges with regards to agriculture, defence and finances—I wish to emphasise the positives, such as US components, and the fact that we can take the brightest and the best from all over the world and that we can replace the common agricultural policy with a policy that works for us to improve the environment. There is everything to play for. I urge the House to be positive and support the Queen's Speech.

9.13 pm

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I wish to start with a statement that will cause anger and disbelief on the Conservative Benches:

“Parliament has remained sovereign throughout our membership of the EU.”

Those are not my words; they are the words of the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. In other words, he has admitted that the notion of taking back sovereignty to this Parliament is nonsense. Some of us have a much more democratic tradition. We believe that the sovereignty that is exercised in this place belongs not in this place, but in the people who have sent us to represent them here. For me, that principle of the sovereignty of the people is a red line, on which neither I nor the SNP will ever budge an inch. That is why 62% of our sovereign citizens say that they want to stay in the European Union. It is not about being defeatist, remoaner or continuity remain, but about respecting the will of the sovereign people. If the nearest we can come to that is to retain our membership of the single market and customs union, then that is what we will do. If that has to mean Scotland looking for a differentiated deal, as has already been guaranteed to Northern Ireland, or having to ask for a special deal as well, that is what we will ask for.

I have one ask for when the Government sum up: will they tell us exactly what is going to happen now with the Joint Ministerial Committee, because there seem to have been two JMCs operating since the Brexit vote? The Government have attended a JMC that was wonderful and so constructive—everybody had a great time and thought that it was very helpful—but the Governments of the devolved nations have attended a JMC that was a total and utter waste of time, for they went and spent 45 minutes being told what the UK Government had decided, and if they were very lucky they might get the chance to decide whether they wanted milk and sugar in their tea or coffee. That is the extent of the consultation we have had so far. It is not enough.

I was delighted to hear the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) insist in her maiden speech that the Government of Wales must be part of these negotiations. I look forward to the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Lesley Laird), using her maiden speech to make the equivalent demand on behalf of the people of Scotland.

Membership of the single market is not the same as access to the single market. Anyone who does not understand that difference really needs to get themselves better informed before they take part in this debate. Those who understand the difference but deliberately try to pretend that they are exactly the same thing have no place in this House or in any other House of politics, because they are simply trying to con the electors.

Access to the single market means you can sell your tomatoes, plums, beer and whisky in Europe. Membership of the single market means the Europeans have got to accept your produce on exactly the same terms as everybody else's. The difference between membership and access is exceptionally great. As my dear friend the former Member for Gordon, Alex Salmond, used to say, the international guild of Patagonian shoemakers has access to the single market, but that does not do it any good.

Access to the single market on its own is worthless, so unless we can retain membership of the single market and of the customs union, we could be looking at 80,000 job losses in Scotland. That price is not worth paying simply to meet this Government's continued obsession with immigration. They tell us that we cannot be in the single market or the customs union because we have to get immigration down, but not a single word has been spoken in this debate to explain why cutting immigration is essential. Cutting immigration to the levels that the Tories are obsessed with will cause immense damage to our health service, our public services and our economy. Worse, it will make these nations far less attractive and far less pleasant places to live.

9.17 pm

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): The people of Bristol West are, mostly, remainers and proud of it, and we want the closest possible relationship with the EU, but my constituents also want me to press the Government on global concerns—climate change, trade justice and the refugee crisis. Climate change is a clear and present danger, and global temperatures have risen to 1° warmer than pre-industrial revolution levels. Change across the world is accelerating and our commitment under the Paris 2015 agreement is to limit further rises to no more than 1°. We need carbon dioxide emissions to peak before 2020 and fall to zero by 2070 by weaning ourselves off fossil fuels, and we need to press our international ally across the Atlantic also to honour its commitment.

An unprecedented 63.5 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide due to conflict. As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on refugees, I spend a lot of time on refugee policy: only a fraction of refugees ever come to the UK and the global system is broken because, designed for cold war circumstances, it leaves refugees either trapped in their own country or stuck for years in camps in neighbouring countries, without work. Small wonder that some will, out of desperation, risk very dangerous journeys to other shores.

This is also economically and geopolitically dangerous. If refugees are not allowed to work, they cannot provide for themselves. They also lose skills and experience, which will be necessary to rebuild their own countries post-conflict to help return them to stability.

In Uganda, refugees are allowed and supported to work or to start businesses. We have much to learn from other countries about responding to refugees, and we also have much to contribute.

The Secretary of State referred earlier to doing trade deals for the benefit of one country only. On behalf of the people of Bristol West, I urge him and his colleagues to think more widely and about least-developed countries in particular, and to integrate environmental protection, workers' rights, human rights and the impact on developing countries into all trade deals.

In conclusion, we in Bristol West want the Government not to become so distracted by Brexit that they neglect vital action on climate change, we want reform of the international refugee system, and we want trade agreements to contribute to, not detract from, social justice, because this beautiful planet and everything and everyone on it, from humans to microbes, cannot wait.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I was about to call Ian Paisley, but I cannot see him in the Chamber. We are impoverished by that. In the meantime we will hear from Kate Green.

9.19 pm

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker; the Chamber's loss is my gain. Before turning to the main topic of the debate, may I say what a pleasure it has been to listen to the maiden speeches of so many hon. Members? I congratulate them on their lucid and articulate speeches and look forward to hearing many more such contributions in the months and years ahead.

I want to take a moment or two to touch on another aspect of the Gracious Speech. The issue of schools funding is particularly important to my constituents. Trafford has traditionally been an underfunded authority, so I initially welcomed the Government's intention to develop a new funding formula. But the formula brought forward towards the end of the previous Parliament has been holed below the water line by the lack of overall funding in the pot. Trafford stands to see real-terms budget cuts of over £14 billion by 2019-20, which will mean the loss of teaching and support jobs. I say to Ministers that rearranging the deckchairs by treating the deprivation funding as in some way double funding simply will not do, because it will put schools in my constituency with very disadvantaged intakes under very significant pressure. We need to ensure that there is enough money in the total pot and then have a new funding formula that meets the needs of all pupils in all schools, especially those who are disadvantaged.

Let me turn now to the main topic of the debate, which is Brexit and foreign affairs. Over the weekend I asked my constituents what they thought the main focus of this Parliament should be. Overwhelmingly, those I spoke to were clear that the focus should be getting the best Brexit deal we can. I am not surprised that they considered that to be of such significance. After all, our constituency has a long history of manufacturing, distribution and trading. We recognise the jobs and trade that have come to us from our membership of the European Union. Many businesses in my constituency have integrated, EU-wide operations. Goods are manufactured in my constituency and then transferred to the Republic of Ireland for packaging, and then they come back to the UK for distribution. Those are integrated operations that cannot face the costs and difficulties of new barriers and tariffs being placed in the way.

In the year since the referendum, my constituents have also spoken, as have many businesses across my constituency, about the importance of being able to access the widest possible labour pool. Industries in my constituency, from paper making and hospitality to health and social care, need to be able to access an international labour pool. Indeed, I have heard the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union acknowledge on many occasions the importance of not shutting the door on the European labour pool, and of the time it will take us to build up the skills and capacity we need in our own labour market.

All of that tells me that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) said, we need to keep the option of remaining in the customs union on the table. Indeed, I would go further and say that we also need to remain in the

single market. If those are the benefits that across the House we think are important—and I think we have heard tonight that by and large we do—why not just take on board the fact that we already have structures in place within the European Union that would deliver them? I hope that we will not knock off the table ideas that can continue to work or that can be made to work simply out of a misreading of the referendum result or a misreading of what is in the interests of the Conservative party but not those of the country as a whole.

Finally, I was pleased to hear that legislative consent will be sought from the devolved Administrations.

9.24 pm

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): I add my congratulations to Members who have made their maiden speeches this evening—particularly those who have hung around and listened to the rest of the debate.

I once drove through a snowstorm to get from Darlington to Jedburgh. I clearly remember driving up Carter Bar, which leads over the border between Scotland and England. When I reached the top, I was chuffed to bits: I had manoeuvred a rear-wheel-drive automatic through difficult terrain in a snowstorm. Then the reality dawned on me: the second half of the journey would be the hard bit. A steep decline, twisting and turning with no road markings and every chance of running off the road—that is what lay ahead, and that is my Brexit allegory.

The Prime Minister and her cohorts, blinded with power, have marched us to the top of the hill, only to discover that in this case it is a cliff edge. Over time, plenty of people have negotiated difficult journeys but I fear that the Brexit journey that lies ahead will be particularly dangerous. Those leading it will not admit just how hard it is going to be. They should be seeking out every pitfall and identifying all the hazards—instead, we are being fed a diatribe of jingoistic clichés.

The situation was a mess before the Prime Minister called a general election but now her selfish actions have complicated matters beyond anyone's wildest nightmare. No one will form a coalition with this precarious Government; the Democratic Unionists have chosen to provide their votes when it suits them, supplying a billion pounds' worth of tissues when it all goes wrong.

This brave new world seems to be based on an, "We did it before and we can do it again" empire mentality, flag waving and patriotism. As we turn our backs on the European Union and seek to create new trade agreements, we will require diplomacy and negotiating skills, which so far have been conspicuously absent in the whole Brexit mess. That is one reason why I have been delighted to hear that politicians across the EU have in increasing numbers been prepared to add their support for Scotland to remain in the EU and the single market. While the UK was committed to the EU, those same voices remained silent: they respected the UK and its position. However, by serving article 50 to leave the EU, the UK has turned its back on the EU and the single market. As a result, the loyalty of previous partners has been lost.

Where is Scotland's influence in these negotiations? While Scotland makes up only 8.6% of the population of the UK, the Scottish fishing zone represents over 60% of UK waters—the fourth largest sea area in EU core waters. Scotland has 32% of the UK's land area. We provide 40% of wind, wave and solar energy production; 47% of the open cast coal production; 62% of the

[Ronnie Cowan]

timber production; 65% of the natural gas production; 81% of the untapped coal reserves; 92% of the hydro-electric power; 96.5% of the crude oil production; and 100% of the Scotch whisky industry. Yet we have no voice. If these negotiations are to have any credibility, the Scottish Government must have a place at the negotiations. Anything less is a flagrant disregard of the democratic standings of the United Kingdom.

9.27 pm

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): When the Foreign Secretary makes his concluding remarks, I hope he will make it clear that the discussions are not going to be contingent on what the devolved Assemblies do. He will certainly take their view, but they will have no veto over the will of the British people across the entirety of the United Kingdom.

A lot has been said in this debate about the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and in the next three or so minutes I want to focus my comments on the Republic. It stands to lose most out of Brexit—not Northern Ireland, as some in this debate have tried to imply. I agree that we must have a frictionless border, which is good for Northern Irish trade, but the border must not become the weak link in security terms. We must not sacrifice the security of any of the peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—or, for that matter, the people of the Republic of Ireland—for an open border that does not protect our people.

Last week, I informed the House that security analysts had made it clear that levels of radicalisation are worryingly high in the Republic of Ireland. If that is the case, let us face up to it and address the matter. The five issues that President Tusk and Monsieur Barnier wish to agree with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland—a unique relationship between our two countries; the avoidance of a hard border; keeping the common travel area in place; no harm to the Republic's trading relationship with the United Kingdom; and the maintenance of the peace between our two nations—are almost exclusively within the gift of Monsieur Barnier. The House should recognise that. He can do more to ensure that those five things are maintained than anyone else in the discussion. I urge the Republic of Ireland, therefore, to take the same position as the United Kingdom because it cannot afford to remain uncritical of the EU. The EU should not blackmail the Republic of Ireland, as it should not be allowed to blackmail Northern Ireland.

The director of social policy at Trinity College Dublin said in a letter to the leader of the Democratic Unionist party:

“If the Government of the Republic of Ireland is so foolish as to seek to stay in the EU when Northern Ireland and Britain leave, it is the Republic, not the UK, that will be putting the Common Anglo-Irish Travel and Trade Area at risk.”

Those are very important comments because the onus is actually on the Republic of Ireland to address its problems with Europe. It is not for Northern Ireland to address those issues. Since 2014, the Republic of Ireland has been paying €1.7 billion to be a member of the EU.

**Andrew Rosindell:** Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that there is another border between the European Union and the UK, and that is between Gibraltar and Spain? What is his view on that one?

**Ian Paisley:** The hon. Gentleman knows that I fully support Gibraltar, but I do not have time to deal with that issue at this point.

Post-Brexit, the Republic of Ireland will be required to pay even more to make up for the UK leaving the EU. All the trading issues between the Republic of Ireland and the UK show very clearly that the Republic of Ireland can do far better by leaving the EU along with the UK. I hope that the Republic of Ireland gets that message loud and clear, and recognises that it can do more for our common citizenship by leaving the EU along with us.

9.31 pm

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): It has been a pleasure this afternoon and this evening to take part in a debate with such excellent maiden speeches from both sides of the House.

A year ago, the country voted very narrowly to leave the EU. The Prime Minister has spent the past year trying to articulate her version of Brexit. In calling the election, she sought very explicitly to strengthen her mandate to deliver a hard Brexit. The country looked at the Prime Minister's version of Brexit and did not support it. On her own terms, she failed, and she has no mandate to negotiate the hard Brexit for which she sought support. My constituents voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, and I stood in the general election on a firm promise that, if re-elected, I would continue to be a strong voice for their firmly pro-remain views. I am pleased that my constituents gave me that mandate. More than 50% of the total registered electorate returned me to this House, and I stand firm in my commitment to represent them and to speak up for a continued relationship with the EU that reflects our values of tolerance, diversity and internationalism, protects our jobs, public services, environment and rights at work, and enables the UK to play the fullest possible role in working for peace and security in an increasingly unstable world.

Although the country voted to leave the EU, not a single person in the UK voted to become poorer, to damage our public services or to live in a country that is less fair or less safe. Yet we are seeing those impacts in the fall in the value of the pound, increasing inflation and the calamitous drop in the number of EU nationals applying to fill nursing vacancies in our NHS or study at UK universities. Brexit is harming the UK. It is the duty and responsibility of this House to scrutinise the Government's approach to it and to call a halt to any aspects of the process that will result in material damage to our country.

I have some clear questions for the Government. Will they accept that leaving the single market and the customs union are not inevitable consequences of leaving the EU, and put them back on the negotiating table? The single market and the customs union are vital for British jobs and businesses because they provide tariff-free access to the largest international market for our goods and services. They are also important, however, because they are based on shared values and are governed by a framework of rules that create not only the largest, but the fairest, international market. They provide a basis for trade that ensures protection for workers in relation to employment rights and health and safety at work, and that ensures protection for our environment.

Will the Government provide assurances that, in seeking to negotiate additional trade agreements with other economic communities, they will place environmental protection, employment rights, and health and safety centre stage, or will they sacrifice our high standards in a race to the bottom to enable the UK to compete in markets where costs are lower because key protections are not in place?

Finally, the Prime Minister made it clear today that EU nationals living in the UK are still pawns in the Government's negotiating strategy. The Government should make an unconditional commitment to EU nationals, who make a vital contribution to our economy and our communities. Even if the Prime Minister is able to secure a deal along the lines she has set out today, it is still not clear on what basis the EU nationals we urgently need to work in our economy and public services will be able to come to the UK in the future. I call on the Government today to urgently set out a positive and welcoming approach to immigration and to explain how the key workforce needs of the UK—of our NHS, construction industry, agriculture and scientific research—can continue to be met in the future.

9.35 pm

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): May I start by saying how delighted I am that the Foreign Secretary is actually taking part in this debate on foreign policy? During the election, I turned up to a number of foreign policy debates—one at the Royal United Services Institute, one at Radio 4 and another at Sky—and he was nowhere to be seen. Chatham House, Channel 4 and “Newsnight” had to cancel their debates because he refused to take part. However, I saw him having regular debates—indeed, wrestling matches—on television with my good friend the shadow Communities Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne), and I have to admit that I felt what can only be described as a pang of jealousy, because I thought to myself, “When is Boris going to try and wrestle me?” But I am very glad that he is involved in the debate today.

It is also good to see so many new Members present for this important debate. We have had some excellent contributions from those making their maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones) spoke with great eloquence about the Brexit Parliament. I have always believed that this House could do with more lawyers—particularly those from council estates—and he has clearly showed why.

My new hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) delivered a speech of great passion, talking about the importance of frigates to our national defence, and demonstrating his pride in his home town. I think the people of Plymouth will be equally proud to count him among their MPs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) showed what a powerful voice she will be in this House, not just for her constituents, but particularly for the heartbroken and, as she said, terrified Tesco workers who have lost their jobs. She also spoke on behalf of citizens of the whole world when she dealt with the reality of climate change—a theme I will return to in my speech.

We also had maiden speeches from the hon. Members for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie), who gave a confident and entertaining performance,

and for Mansfield (Ben Bradley), who told us about his passion for bins. In my current spirit of generosity, may I also—I never thought I would hear myself say this about a Liberal Democrat—welcome the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) back to this place?

I congratulate all the new Members. I only wish that their maiden speeches had been made debating a Queen's Speech that was truly worthy of its name. Let us be honest: this was not one. The Prime Minister promised us a Government that would tackle the big issues facing Britain; instead, we got a Queen's Speech that ducked every one of them. It is timid on domestic policy. It is vacuous on foreign policy. And on Brexit, we have just a bunch of Bills whose titles we now know, but whose contents remain a mystery.

However, I do want to praise the Foreign Secretary, because at least he was the only member of the Cabinet who had the foresight to put absolutely no policies in his section of the manifesto, so he was not in the embarrassing position of having to abandon them later in the Queen's Speech. Indeed, in the 2,285 words in the Tory manifesto devoted to “Global Britain” in an “Uncertain World”, only one nation was actually mentioned by name, and that, of course, was Donald Trump's United States. Russia? Korea? China? Not a word. Iran? Iraq? Afghanistan? Yemen? Syria? Daesh? None of them mentioned.

I hope Conservative Members realise how unprecedented that is. This was only the second Tory manifesto since the Yom Kippur war not even to mention the middle east. In the same sections of the 2015 Tory manifesto, separate policies were set out on 23 different countries. Now the Government are down to just one. The question is why. Why is the Tory manifesto and this Tory Queen's Speech such a blank space with regard to foreign policy? The answer, of course, is clear: their sole foreign policy ambition is to stay in lockstep with Donald Trump, whatever hill he chooses to march us up next. That means we are left with a Government who no longer know their own mind on foreign policy because they are beholden to a President who keeps changing his.

Nowhere was this more pathetically exposed than on the Paris agreement on climate change. In November, two weeks after Donald Trump's election, I stood at this Dispatch Box and urged the Foreign Secretary to make Paris the first priority in talks with him. What did he say in response? He said that my concerns were “premature”. At the end of March, I stood here again and said that we must tell Donald Trump that Britain would not stand by in silence while he wrecked the Paris agreement. What did the Foreign Secretary say? He said that I was being “far too pessimistic”. He said:

“We have heard the mutterings of the right hon. Lady; let us see what the American Administration actually do. I think she will be pleasantly surprised.”—[*Official Report*, 28 March 2017; Vol. 624, c. 116.]

Well, we have now seen what Trump has done. I was not very surprised, and it definitely was not very pleasant. What made it so much worse was this Government's frankly spineless response. Rather than join the legion of world leaders, US mayors and governors, and business chiefs around the world in condemning Trump's withdrawal from Paris, our Prime Minister would say only that she felt “disappointed”. The Foreign Secretary explained that it was not for Britain to “wave fingers” at the

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US President. Well, if he gets a chance to organise Donald Trump's state visit, he will see how British people feel about waving fingers.

This whole sorry episode prompts the question that is at the very heart of today's debate: "If this Government cannot persuade Britain's closest ally to stick to the Paris agreement, and if they cannot even stand up to him when he refuses to do so, what chance have they got of getting the rest of Europe to give us the deal we want on Brexit? The answer is, "None." If they continue down their current path, the inevitable result will be Britain crashing out of Europe in just over 600 days in a state of total chaos, with millions of jobs and half our trade in jeopardy. I have absolutely no doubt that the Foreign Secretary will stand up in a moment and tell me that I am being premature, that I am being overly pessimistic, and that I will be pleasantly surprised. All I have to say to him is, "That's what you said about Paris."

If we are hoping for a different outcome on Brexit, with this Government, with this Queen's Speech, and with the same crack team of negotiators sitting on the Government Front Bench, we might as well give up now. Yet it does not have to be this way. We could have a Foreign Secretary and a Brexit Secretary working night and day to get the best deal for Britain, not fighting like cats and dogs about who is going to be the next leader. We could have a Government leading the country to a better, more prosperous future, not a Queen's Speech devoid of ideas, hope or vision. We could have a Prime Minister of principle and strength able to stand tall with European leaders and stand up to Donald Trump, not a hopeless Tory leader just trying to make it through the summer. With all that in place, we could have a Britain that actually has a foreign policy of its own—a Britain ready once again to be a beacon of strength and security, prosperity and values for every country around the world. This Queen's Speech does nothing to advance that. This Government are doing nothing to advance that. They are too weak, too shambolic and too divided to take this country forward, and it is about time we had a Government who can.

9.43 pm

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** This excellent debate has been landmarked by a succession of first-rate maiden speeches. I single out the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin), who spoke passionately in the cause of social justice for her constituents; my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Ben Bradley), who showed exactly why he is the first member of our party to capture that seat for 100 years; the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard), who spoke movingly of his predecessor's campaign for hedgehogs, as well as a rather important matter relating to that great port; and my hon. Friend the Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie), who spoke for many in this Chamber, and many in this country, when he said that it was time for the whole House to come together in the national interest and get Brexit done.

I have to say that, after about 37 speeches, my abiding impression is that there is far more that unites this House—both sides of the Chamber—in our approach to Brexit than divides it, and there is more confidence in

this country's future than we would expect given some of the coverage in the media. I was particularly pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), who I am delighted to see in her place, saying that we have a great economy and a bright future. She is entirely correct. My hon. Friends the Members for Fareham (Suella Fernandes), for Witney (Robert Courts), for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) and for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), and many others, raised their voices in favour of free trade and free trade deals.

Not a single Labour voice—not the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) nor the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), and certainly not the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry)—dissented from the point made so powerfully earlier by the leader of the Labour party, who said that it was his ambition to make sure that Brexit delivered new free trade deals around the world. None of them dissented from that, and of course the logical consequence of that is coming out of the customs union. There is far more agreement—[*Interruption.*] Well, this chap—the hon. Member for North East Fife—is not a Labour MP, as far as I understand the constitutional position. None of them dissented from that essential and fundamental understanding about Brexit. There is far more that unites us than divides us.

I think that confidence is right and justified in our country, because the ideal of and belief in free trade continues to lift billions of people out of poverty around the world. In 1990, 37% of the world's population lived in absolute poverty. That figure has now gone down to 10%, and it is falling.

Wherever there is a crisis in the world—wherever there is terror or conflict—we will find that it is the United Kingdom that is at the forefront of trying to tackle those scourges. In Iraq and Syria, we should all be proud that the RAF is delivering more airstrikes against Daesh than any other air force apart from that of the United States. In the face of a revanchist and resurgent Russia, it is the UK that has kept up the pressure for sanctions over what it has done in Ukraine, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale) rightly pointed out. In the face of the blood-curdling threats from North Korea, it is this country, in the UN, that has helped to marshal a coalition against what Kim Jong-un is doing. I am delighted to say that that coalition—hon. Members may have followed this—includes, for the first time, the Chinese, which is an important and hopeful development for our world.

In one of the most grizzly conflicts currently taking place in sub-Saharan Africa, it is this country that is sending 400 peacekeepers to South Sudan. We can be proud of what they are doing. If we think about the crisis that has just broken out in the Gulf—an unwelcome dispute between some of our closest friends—I can assure right hon. and hon. Members that it is to the United Kingdom that the world is looking to help to resolve it. That will take some time, but I have absolutely no doubt that we will get there. It is because the world looks to Britain, and it is because the work of the UK overseas is so vital for global security and stability, that it is absolutely vital that we resist the temptation to run down our defences and abrogate our responsibilities to our friends and partners around the world.

**Caroline Lucas:** Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

**Boris Johnson:** I will certainly give way, but then I must wind up.

**Caroline Lucas:** Does the Foreign Secretary feel equally proud of the UK's role in selling arms to Saudi Arabia that then find their way to Yemen? He did not mention that.

**Boris Johnson:** As the hon. Lady knows very well, the United Kingdom holds the pen at the UN in trying to bring a resolution to the crisis in Yemen. As the Prime Minister said earlier today, of course a humanitarian disaster is taking place, but it is folly and an illusion to believe that that humanitarian disaster is in any way the responsibility of the United Kingdom. On the contrary, the policy the hon. Lady advocates of disengagement and not being involved at all would void us of any influence or any role at all in bringing about a peaceful resolution in Yemen, although I understand and appreciate the point that she makes. We can be justly proud of the work that has been done in the UN and elsewhere in trying to solve the Yemen crisis.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) pointed out in his excellent speech, we should be proud of our entire diplomatic network and our superb armed forces. Members on both sides of the House spoke well about the strength of our armed forces, including the hon. Members for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) and for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport. Of course, our intelligence services are also admired around the world.

The Queen's Speech said that we will take new powers to set our own sanctions policy. I have alluded to the importance of sanctions in respect of Ukraine and other areas. I trust that that Bill, in the spirit of unity we have seen for much of this debate, will attract cross-party support.

Do not forget that this country is the second biggest military power in NATO, with a new aircraft carrier putting forth to sea today that is, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence acknowledges, the biggest ship ever built in this country—I believe it is longer than the Palace of Westminster. But even more important than our military role—do not forget that our military forces are engaged in, I think, 33 countries around the world, which is far more than any other European country—

**Stephen Doughty:** Is the Foreign Secretary willing to commit to the level of 82,000 for our Army? What does he have to say about the chronic under-recruitment in the Army at the moment? Surely with all those commitments abroad, we should be boosting the numbers in our Army, not cutting them.

**Boris Johnson:** I have already congratulated the hon. Gentleman on his remarks about our armed forces. I am glad that he at least among Opposition Members supports our armed forces. He will know that we are committed not only to spending 2% of our GDP on defence, but to a further 0.5% increment every year until 2020. As my right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary has pointed out, we will maintain the size of our armed forces, which are superb and the best in the world.

Even more important than our military firepower and throw-weight, however, and even more important than our vast aid budget, is Britain's soft power—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) interjects from a sedentary position to suggest that our aid budget is not vast. Having spent a year in this job and having flown around the world, I can tell her that the world is lost in admiration for how much this country spends on international development and for the efficacy of British aid spending. She should be proud of what the Department for International Development does. It is a huge, huge sum of money. By the way, the only question is how we can ensure that that wonderful aid budget is used so as to deliver the political and economic objectives of this country more effectively, and that is what we are working on.

Even more important than our vast aid budget is our soft power—the sometimes invisible network through which this country's ideas and values are projected around the world. It can be seen through our partnerships and friendships in Europe, and with the overseas territories and dependencies. A couple of hon. Members asked about the future of Gibraltar. Let us be absolutely clear that the sovereignty of Gibraltar is inviolable and will remain so for as long as this Government are in power.

**Emily Thornberry:** The right hon. Gentleman is probably aware that the question for Gibraltar is not sovereignty, but what its trading relationship will be, and how people will be able to move backwards and forwards from Gibraltar to Spain and continue to trade. It is the continuing economic position that is important.

**Boris Johnson:** As the right hon. Lady will understand, we are absolutely bound to protect the economic interests of the people of Gibraltar, not least—this point can be made in respect of the whole argument about Brexit—because of course a strong Gibraltar and a robust Gibraltar economy are in the interests of Andalucia and the rest of Spain. We will get that done.

We have many networks around the world, not only in the territories and dependencies, but in the 52 Commonwealth nations that will come to London next year for a landmark summit, and through our languages, universities and broadcasting. It is a stunning fact that we sell £1.3 billion of TV programmes abroad. That is almost 10 times as much as the French, I am delighted to say—without in any way wishing to be chauvinistic about this. Indeed, our biggest single market for UK TV programmes in Europe is France. I am absolutely delighted that it is.

We project ourselves through our music, and the broadcasting of that music and great musical festivals, in which this country specialises. When this weekend the BBC broadcast Glastonbury around the world—*[HON. MEMBERS: "Glahstonbury?"]* It is "Glahstonbury"; it is in the south-west. Of course, I know it was perhaps different for the people who spent £285 to go and be among the crowd there to watch elderly people such as Kris Kristofferson, but I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that when those extraordinary scenes on the stage at Glastonbury were broadcast, friends and admirers of this country around the world were genuinely alarmed that at a time of such uncertainty, the leader of the main Opposition party in this country should have exercised such an orphic spell on those who had previously been his

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opponents that they have meekly acceded to his desire not just to run down our defences but, as he said on the stage of Glastonbury—“Glahstonbury”—to scrap our nuclear defence. That was what he said, and it will have gone around the world.

It will have gone around the world that the leader of the main Opposition party in this country is actually committed to getting rid of the fundamentals of our nuclear defence, imperilling—this is the crucial point—not merely our own safety, but the safety of our friends and allies. That is not this Government’s way, and that is not the right way for this country. That is why we need a strong, open, confident, outward-looking and global Britain—for the good of our people and for the good of the world. I commend the Gracious Speech to the House.

*Ordered,* That the debate be now adjourned.—(Craig Whittaker.)

*Debate to be resumed tomorrow.*

**Mr Speaker:** If Members insist inexplicably upon leaving and denying themselves the opportunity to hear the Adjournment debate, perhaps they will do so quickly and quietly, so that the rest of the House can attend to the words and messages of Mr Jim Fitzpatrick.

## Grenfell Tower Fire

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(Craig Whittaker.)

10 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the tragic Grenfell Tower fire and to put on record a number of questions for the Government, most of which are on the record already, especially after the statement today by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. I will not be covering the awful response by the authorities locally to the survivors—that is well documented—but I do want to pay tribute to all those who tried to help, volunteers and officials, and to my new hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad), who has performed admirably in the service of her constituents.

Because I was in the London fire brigade for 23 years and I am a former Fire Minister, I have been asked to make many comments on the fire. I need to say that I am no fire prevention expert. I was an operational fireman for 13 years and an elected Fire Brigades Union lay official for 10 years, acting as a safety rep, as well as performing other duties. I am therefore no expert, but I know many who are—those who work with the all-party group on fire safety rescue and in the field of firefighting, fire protection and fire prevention, and of course I had my departmental officials, who were also very knowledgeable.

Armed with that assistance, experience and common sense, there are many questions that I want to ask or, rather, that I want the public inquiry to address. It would be very helpful if the Minister gave the House any details of when more might be known about the inquiry, which will face many questions on many issues. They include: the source of the fire; the rapidity of the spread of the fire; the catastrophic failure of all the fire protection features that the building should have contained; the building’s refurbishment, including the original specifications and the materials actually used, as well as the quality of the work and the finish; the monitoring of building control; the inspection of the completed job by the council, the designated responsible person and the fire service; and the recommendations of the Lakanal House coroner’s inquiry concerning a review of building regulations guidance in Approved Document B and the role of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. I will finish with the question of the Government’s decision not to equip new schools with fire sprinklers, reversing the upgraded advice that they should have sprinklers, published in 2008.

Mr Speaker, you may know—I would be surprised if you did not—that my original bid was for an Adjournment debate this week on the subject of the governance and accountability of registered social landlords, or housing associations, but obviously matters changed shortly after and I retendered my bid. When Labour came to power in 1997, there were 2 million homes below the decency threshold in our social housing sector. We tackled that challenge aggressively, spending billions on new kitchens, bathrooms, double glazing, central heating and security. The de-municipalisation of much housing brought many pluses in recent decades, but also problems. Those wider problems need examination, as we have heard with the many challenges in recent days, in connection

with how we provide social housing in the UK. How we address that question sets the perspective for how we approach the build, maintenance and safety of those homes—the kind of housing I lived in for decades.

In respect of the questions I want to raise, I would like to thank Jon O'Neill OBE of the Fire Protection Association, London fire brigade, Sir Ken Knight, Ronnie King, the Fire Brigades Union, the Commons Library and the Lakanal House coroner for their assistance with material for my remarks this evening. Let me take the questions in turn.

The police have apparently identified the source of the fire as white goods on the fourth floor. London fire brigade and the Electrical Safety Council, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter), who I am pleased to see in his place, have been leading the Total Recalls campaign for such faulty white goods—dryers and the like—and for improvement in their design. Initially, the Government seemed well disposed to this. I am pleased to see the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service in his place, as he responded so positively and has had a number of meetings with colleagues about the campaign, which would have required compulsory product registration at the retail point of sale and better manufacturer marking of goods to allow them to be identified after a fire and traced back to source. One person has already died and there have been a series of serious fires, including one in a Hammersmith tower block. Fortunately, the fire integrity of that block was better than at Grenfell. If the Minister responding to the debate has any information about the campaign from his colleague, I would be very pleased to hear it.

As for the fire integrity of the Grenfell block, it is difficult to know where to start. The public inquiry, assisted by fire investigators, forensic specialists from the Metropolitan Police Service and the Building Research Establishment, will pronounce on the cladding and the insulation, why the fire spread so rapidly and what other contributing factors there may be. There will be questions not only about the fire resistance specification of the material used for the refurbished block, but about whether the architect's original plan was followed, as well as the finish. Those, along with compartmentalisation and correct fire doors, are the basis of the “stay put” policy about which so much has been written. I am sure that the public inquiry will look again at that as well.

The failure of all the cladding panels tested since the fire, allied to the Secretary of State's startling information from Camden earlier today about fire doors, indicates a complete systemic failure. Many decent local authorities and housing associations are under scrutiny in relation to how they manage their housing stock, and many good construction companies are as well. Questions about monitoring, building control, “responsible person” and fire brigade sign-off, and the rules that we put in place, will all be issues for the inquiry, as well as the question of how contracts are delivered, including the system of subcontracting.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** I am sorry. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have declined intervention requests from other colleagues. If I have time at the end of my speech, I shall be happy to give way.

I am not sure whether the Minister will be able to comment on any of those building matters. The fire service, as inspector and enforcement body, should offer us some peace of mind, but reports of a 25% reduction in both domestic fire brigade inspections and fire safety audits do not inspire confidence, and perhaps the Minister will be able to comment on the accuracy of those reports. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service is present; he may be able to advise his hon. Friend.

Of course, the Lakanal House fire, the six people killed there and the coroner's inquiry were a wake-up call, as was the Shirley Towers fire in Southampton, in which two firefighters, Alan Bannon and James Shears, died. Much happened as a result, but not all the lessons were learned. The key lesson for the Government was about the reviewing of the building regulations guidance on fire, as contained in Approved Document B. That is the architects' bible: it says what is allowed and what is required. The guidance needs to be reviewed regularly to take into account not only new methods of construction, but new materials being used. They are changing all the time, as we can see from the structures and the skyline around us. Approved Document B gives details of when and where sprinklers should be used, and what types of fire alarm system should be mandatory for which types of building.

I welcomed the Secretary of State's announcement earlier today, and the convening of his new independent expert panel of advisers. As I said to him at the time, the Building Regulations Advisory Committee has historically been central to such work. The last published review of Approved Document B appeared in 2006. Her Honour Frances Kirkham, CBE, the Lakanal House coroner, wrote to the Secretary of State in 2013 saying, very simply,

“It is recommended that your Department review”

Approved Document B. The Secretary of State's response, in the same year, was:

“We have commissioned research which will feed into a future review of this part of the Building Regulations. We expect this work to form the basis of a formal review leading to the publication of a new edition of the Approved Document in 2016/17.”

As the Minister will know, however, BRAC has not met for five years, although a succession of Ministers assured us that work was in hand.

As late as last Thursday, when I asked the Prime Minister what assurance she could give

“that the review of building regulations and Approved Document B, as recommended by the Lakanal House coroner, will be carried out as urgently as possible, and that the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, which has historically undertaken this work, will be recalled as a matter of urgency”,

she replied:

“That work is indeed in hand.”

She also said:

“Obviously, that will be one of the issues that the public inquiry will want to look at.”—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 178.]

As I said then, that work does not need to wait for a recommendation from a public inquiry. Can the Minister assure us that the new independent panel of experts will undertake it as a matter of urgency? I should be grateful if he could give us a timeframe for its work programme.

[*Jim Fitzpatrick*]

The final matter that I want to raise, before making some concluding remarks, is Government policy in respect of fire sprinklers in new schools. In 2008, the Minister of State at the Department for Education upgraded the guidance for local education authorities and school governors, and changed the wording on what was expected. He wrote, and the Department published, the following:

“It is now our expectation that all new schools will have sprinklers fitted. Any exceptions to this will have to be justified by demonstrating that a school is low risk”—

for instance, single-storey or brick-built. The Government have changed this guidance, and the now revised version from the Department for Education states:

“The Building Regulations do not require the installation of fire sprinkler suppression systems in school buildings for life safety and therefore BB 100”—

that is, building bulletin 100—

“no longer includes an expectation that most new school buildings will be fitted with them.”

The regulations that it cites are 11 years old. They are overdue for revision, and at least one coroner’s inquiry has requested that they be reviewed. I would be grateful if the Minister confirmed press reports at the weekend that the Government were reversing this and going back to the original guidance from 2008.

Sprinklers save lives, and they are not as expensive as some detractors claim. The situation is not helped by TV adverts, dramas and films incorrectly portraying buildings being flooded whenever a sprinkler head activates. It is only the sprinkler directly above the fire that sprays water, not those across the whole building or even a floor. We know from reports that the cost of fitting sprinklers to Grenfell Tower would have been £200,000. If we divide that by 79—you do the math, Mr Speaker—it works out at just over £2,531 per death, and that figure is likely to come down as more deaths are confirmed.

To conclude, we need to know the terms of reference of the public inquiry as soon as possible. We need to know who is to preside over it, when it will be expected to report and when we can expect interim reports on urgent life safety matters. We need to know when the independent panel will be convened, and when we can expect building regulations and the guidance in Approved Document B to be published.

It has been said often over the past 12 days that the Grenfell Tower fire could have been prevented at best, or at least mitigated. The deaths could also have been prevented, at least in the main. It is right to acknowledge—there has been controversy over this—that the Lakanal House inquiry did not order the retrofitting of all high-rise blocks with fire sprinklers. What it did say was:

“It is recommended that your department”—

the Department for Communities and Local Government—“encourage providers of housing in high-rise residential buildings containing multiple domestic premises to consider the retrofitting of sprinkler systems.”

It was not quite an instruction, but coming from a coroner’s inquiry, it was a pretty forceful recommendation.

There will be harrowing accounts to come at the public inquiry and/or the inquests. Historically, the vast majority of safety legislation has been written after a

tragedy or disaster, and that includes fire regulations. Health and safety regulations, which are much derided in the media, save lives but they also cost money. The message from the Secretary of State’s statement today is that there will be a cost to local authorities and registered social landlords, and we need assurances of Government support that will pay to keep our people safe. The full lessons of Grenfell Tower will not be clear until after the public inquiry, but it is clear that actions need to be taken now. The Government have a responsibility. Ultimately, the buck stops here in Parliament with all of us, and we need to commit the support that is needed in communities across the country now.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** I commend the hon. Gentleman for bringing this matter forward. There are 32 high-rise blocks of flats in Northern Ireland, plus other private high rises as well. Does he think that the independent panel of advisers should include Northern Ireland in its investigation, so that all parts and regions of the United Kingdom can benefit from its findings?

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter of the devolved Assemblies, because there are different practices in different countries. I commend the Welsh Assembly in this regard. Ann Jones, a former colleague of mine in the Fire Brigades Union, has piloted legislation through the Assembly, and Carl Sargeant, the Minister, has been on to my office today. The legislation in Wales is different from ours; it has improved and is more protective. I know that there are different procedures in Northern Ireland and Scotland as well. A lead from the Westminster Government would be very welcome, and I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say. My last word is to commend the emergency service workers—firefighters in the main—who risked life and limb to try to help. If we give them the resources and the kit, they will do the job, and we stand in admiration of them, as always.

10.14 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Alok Sharma):** I start by thanking the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) for calling for this timely debate. As he said, he is a former firefighter and was responsible for fire safety when he was a Minister, so he speaks from a position of knowledge and experience. This House is rightly taking a very strong interest in the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, and we want to ensure that the lessons are learned for the future. This disaster should never have happened, and we are absolutely determined to ensure that this never, ever happens again in our country.

Last week, I attended a community safety partnership meeting with the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Mr Hurd), and we were both deeply moved by the bravery and dignity that has been demonstrated by those directly affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. I pay tribute to all Members here on both sides of the House who have helped and have made a contribution, particularly the new hon. Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad) for the work that she has been doing locally to support her community. Of course, all of us need to do everything we can to help those who have suffered during this tragedy to rebuild

their lives, and that is what the Government are doing. We have put in place measures to help people to get back on their feet, but we absolutely understand that that will take a long time in many cases. As the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse outlined, it is equally important that the questions that are being asked by those who have been directly affected are answered. We need to understand what went wrong and fix it for the future.

The hon. Gentleman has raised several extremely good points, and I will try to address them as I go through my speech. In the spirit of co-operation, however, we need to work together across the House on this issue, so I would like to meet him and colleagues on the all-party parliamentary fire safety rescue group. If he has time tomorrow, I would be happy to sit down and have a discussion with him and those colleagues. It is important that we work together, and I want to demonstrate that there is a clear willingness on the part of the Government to ensure that that happens.

We will do whatever it takes to get to the bottom of the causes of this disaster. There will be a full public inquiry, as the Prime Minister has announced, and it will have an independent chair. We want to be clear that the inquiry should leave absolutely no stone unturned to get to the truth. We will question everyone who has evidence to provide. We want to ensure that the survivors and the victims are consulted on the inquiry's terms of reference and that the victims are able to be represented, so the Government will cover the costs of legal representation. That has been an issue in previous public inquiries, which is why we have been clear about coming forward and making that commitment.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): I appreciate what the Minister is saying about the public inquiry. Can he give any information this evening about when we are likely to have an announcement about the chair or some idea of the timetable, when it is likely to start and over what period it will report?

**Alok Sharma:** I completely understand that colleagues want to have that announcement as soon as possible, and the Government are well aware of that. I hope that there will be an announcement soon and that the work will start. When Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government made his statement earlier today, there was a discussion about how long an inquiry report would take. Clearly, it will be up to the chair to set out the full terms and to determine how to take things forward, but we would ideally want to see an early interim report.

The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse mentioned the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, and I will come on to talk about the panel that the Secretary of State outlined in his statement earlier today. However, the BRAC actually meets several times a year, and I understand from my officials that the most recent meeting was actually last Thursday. The committee talked about the Grenfell Tower tragedy and how its work could have an input into what the Government and the Department are doing but, of course, as the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government also clearly outlined, the committee's scope is more limited. He has talked about a panel that has a wider remit, and I will outline what that panel will be looking at.

As the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse said, there was also a discussion about the coroner's recommendations following the fire at Lakanal House in 2009. The Government took action in a number of areas following that fire. In particular, DCLG provided funding to enable the Local Government Association, in partnership with the housing sector and enforcement authorities, to publish new fire safety guidance for purpose-built flat blocks in 2011. That guidance is still current, and hon. Members may well have seen the letter my Department sent to housing associations and local authorities on 18 June, which clearly referenced that guidance. Of course, I urge all housing providers to ensure that they are following that guidance.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to sprinklers, and I will talk specifically about sprinklers in schools. In April 2011, in response to a coroner's report following a fire-related incident in Southampton, the Department wrote to local authorities and other registered housing providers to ask them to actively consider the recommendation to install sprinkler systems in their existing properties, and he is absolutely right that that is the same recommendation that came from the coroner in the case of the Lakanal House fire.

The hon. Gentleman raised issues with the regime for testing white goods, and the report from the working group on product recalls and safety will be published shortly. The group's recommendation for a strengthened product recall information site has been put into effect, and the British Standards Institution has been commissioned to establish a very clear protocol for product recalls. In this particular case, we know the brand of the product that caused the fire at Grenfell, and obviously my colleagues at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are already in touch with the manufacturer.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned sprinklers in schools, and the current guidance from the Department for Education strongly recommends sprinklers. The Department for Education was going to consult on language that might have weakened that recommendation, but of course that has been withdrawn. It said, "We are currently in contact with schools and all bodies responsible for safety in schools. We are instructing them to carry out checks to identify any buildings which may require further investigation... It has always been the case that sprinklers must be installed in school buildings if a risk assessment identifies them as necessary." Of course that is determined on a case-by-case basis.

The hon. Gentleman said that the coroner's report on Lakanal House addressed part B of the building regulations.

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** My apologies. I should have said that the vice-chair, my hon. Friend the Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glendon), and the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on fire safety and rescue, the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), are both here, so I kindly invite them to our meeting tomorrow, if possible. I did not question the Minister about when BRAC's meetings were, but what he says about the advice on sprinklers in schools is consistent. It is not the guidance that was issued in 2008, but I will not quibble now. I welcome the meeting, where we can clarify the matter with him and his colleagues in the Department for Education. I welcome the fact that there seems to be some movement in the Government's position on that.

**Alok Sharma:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, and I am of course happy to have a detailed discussion on all these points with him tomorrow—if that is possible for him.

The coroner's report recommended that the Government look to simplify the guidance on part B of the building regulation. Although we have been working on the guidance, I accept that the work has not been completed. In the light of what has happened at Grenfell, we are going to have to take a very thorough look at the regulatory regime. That is precisely what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his statement to the House earlier. As he noted, there is an ongoing police investigation, which we are all aware of, and, as the hon. Gentleman noted, there will be an independent public inquiry to get to the truth about what happened and who is responsible. What is absolutely clear is that what we witnessed in the Grenfell Tower fire is a catastrophic failure on a scale that no one thought possible in our country at this time, in 2017. I cannot anticipate what the public inquiry will conclude, but I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he said that the failures must be understood and rectified without

delay, and the Government are absolutely determined to ensure that that happens.

The Secretary of State has informed the House that he is establishing an independent expert advisory panel, and I hope very soon that more information emerges on that. I can already say that it will advise the Government on any immediate steps that need to be taken on fire safety measures, policies, inspection and regulation arising from the Grenfell Tower fire, and it will look at the wider fire safety regime.

I very much look forward to having a meeting with the hon. Gentleman and other colleagues to discuss these matters. As I said at the start of my remarks, this is a time for us to work together, to listen to wide-ranging views and ultimately to ensure that a tragedy such as the Grenfell Tower fire never happens again. We owe that to the victims, to their families and to the country.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.27 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Written Statements

Monday 26 June 2017

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Anti Money Laundering Directive: Register of People with Significant Control

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James):** On Friday, I laid before Parliament two sets of regulations that modify the existing national measures to implement the UK's transposition of Article 30 of the EU Fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive. These regulations are made under powers under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act.

The regulations modify and extend the UK regime for a public register of information about people with significant control over UK companies and limited liability partnerships (LLPs). The register is a core element of the UK's drive to improve corporate transparency. This statement, the regulations and the guidance have been informed by responses received to the discussion paper "Implementing the Fourth Money Laundering Directive: transposition of Article 30: beneficial ownership of corporate and other legal entities" [1].

Specifically, the regulations:

- modify the existing national measures in relation to the legal entities covered (companies, LLPs and SEs) by requiring information to be updated on the register within a prescribed timescale

- extend the amended measures to unregistered companies and listed companies on UK secondary markets

- apply a modified form of the regime to limited partnerships governed by the law of Scotland and to qualifying general partnerships governed by the law of Scotland, collectively known as "eligible Scottish partnerships"

- amend the provisions on circumstances in which information not shown on the public register may be accessed.

Transposition is not required in relation to limited or general partnerships registered or formed under the law applicable elsewhere in the United Kingdom, in view of the distinct, legal status of Scottish partnerships in section 4 of the Partnership Act 1890.

I have also issued and published, in draft, updated statutory guidance on the meaning of significant influence or control in the context of companies, for the register of people with significant control. This is required by paragraph 24 of Schedule 1A of the Companies Act 2006, and is subject to negative resolution by either House.

The term "significant influence or control" is included in the fourth and fifth specified conditions for being a person with significant control. The statutory guidance is required to explain how that term should be interpreted.

I have also published guidance on the meaning of significant influence or control in the context of eligible Scottish partnerships and have updated guidance on the regime for all legal entities in scope and for people who might become a person of significant control over them.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementing-the-fourth-money-laundering-directive-beneficial-ownership-register>.

[HCWS7]

### Richborough Connection Project and East Anglia THREE Offshore Wind Farm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Richard Harrington):** This statement concerns applications made by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc and East Anglia THREE Limited under the Planning Act 2008 for development consent for the installation, operation and maintenance of a 400kV high voltage overhead electric line between Richborough and Canterbury in Kent ("the Richborough Connection Project") and the construction, operation and maintenance of an offshore wind generating station off the coast of Suffolk with related onshore works ("the East Anglia THREE Offshore Wind Farm") respectively.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of receipt of the examining authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a statement to Parliament to announce it. The deadline for the decision on the Richborough Connection Project was 8 June 2017 while the deadline for the East Anglia THREE Offshore Wind Farm is 28 June 2017.

The Secretary of State has decided to set a new deadline for deciding the two applications of 8 August 2017. The decision to set the new deadline for these applications is without prejudice to the decisions on whether to grant or refuse development consents for them.

[HCWS6]

## TREASURY

### ECOFIN: 23 May 2017

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):** A meeting of The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) was held in Brussels on 23 May 2017. EU Finance Ministers discussed the following items:

#### *Annual EIB Governors meeting*

There was a meeting of the EIB Governors preceding ECOFIN. This entailed a speech by the EIB President Werner Hoyer, a Governors discussion and approval of the audit report.

#### *Early morning session*

The Eurogroup President briefed Ministers on the outcomes of the 22 May meeting of the Eurogroup. Ministers then discussed the current economic situation.

#### *Dispute resolution mechanism*

Ministers agreed the general approach to the proposal for a Council directive on double taxation dispute resolution mechanisms in the European Union. The UK supported

this measure. The proposal aims to establish a common dispute resolution regime for EU taxpayers at risk of double taxation.

#### *Common corporate tax base*

Ministers held an orientation debate on the proposal for a Council directive on a Common Corporate Tax Base (CCTB). The CCTB proposal suggests establishing a common set of rules across the EU for calculating companies' taxable profits.

#### *Current financial service legislative proposals*

The Council presidency provided an update on current legislative proposals in the field of financial services.

#### *Movement of capital*

Ministers had an exchange of views on a report by the Economic and Finance Committee (EFC) on the movement of capital and the freedom of payments, and a report by the European Commission on accelerating the capital markets union.

#### *European semester 2017*

Ministers endorsed Council conclusions on the in-depth reviews of macroeconomic imbalances in certain member states carried out by the European Commission as part of the macroeconomic imbalance procedure in 2017. The UK was not subject to an in-depth review in 2017.

*Follow-up to the G20 meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors on 20 April 2017 and the IMF and World Bank spring meetings on 21-23 April 2017 in Washington*

The presidency and the Commission informed Ministers on the outcomes of the G20, IMF and World Bank meetings.

[HCWS8]

### **ECOFIN: 16 June 2017**

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):** A meeting of The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) was held in Luxembourg, on 16 June 2017. EU Finance Ministers discussed the following items:

#### *Early morning session*

The Eurogroup President briefed ministers on the outcomes of the 15 June meeting of the Eurogroup, where consensus was reached on a short-term solution for Greek debt re-structuring and fiscal targets. Commissioner Moscovici also gave a presentation on the euro, area economy in which he flagged the ongoing political risks faced by the euro area.

#### *Reduced VAT rate for electronically supplied publications (e-Publications)*

The Council discussed the proposal for a Council directive amending the VAT directive as regards VAT rates applied to books, newspapers and periodicals. The proposal could not be adopted due to the lack of unanimous agreement. The incoming presidency will decide on the further handling of this file.

#### *General reverse charge mechanism*

The Council were invited to reach a general approach on the proposal for a general reverse, charge mechanism which will allow member states to shift liability for VAT payments from the supplier to the customer, under certain conditions. The proposal could not be adopted

due to the lack of unanimous agreement. The incoming presidency will decide on the further handling of this file.

#### *Strengthening of the Banking Union/Risk-reduction measures*

Under this item, the Council agreed the general approach on a proposal for a directive amending the bank recovery and resolution directive (BRRD) as regards the ranking of unsecured debt instruments in insolvency hierarchy. General approach was also agreed on the proposal for a regulation amending the capital requirements regulation (CRR) as regards the transitional period for mitigating the impact on own funds of the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) 9 and the large exposures treatment of certain public sector exposures denominated in non-domestic currencies of member states. The presidency also presented a progress report on the capital requirements regulation, the capital requirements directive, the banking recovery and resolution directive, the single mechanism regulation, and the European deposit and insurance scheme.

#### *Current financial services legislative proposals*

The presidency informed Council of the state of play of legislative proposals in the field of financial services.

#### *Non-Performing Loans (NPLs)*

The presidency gave an update on the work of the Financial Services Committee's sub-group on NPLs. The sub-group's report on NPLs will be presented to July ECOFIN.

#### *Fight against the financing of terrorism (Commission Action Plan)*

The Commission provided an update to Council on implementation of the action plan on the prevention of terrorist financing, including progress to agree revisions to the fourth anti-money laundering directive.

#### *Capital Markets Union (CMU): Mid-term review*

The Council received a presentation from the Commission on the mid-term review of the CMU action plan, published on 8 June.

#### *Contribution to the European Council meeting on 22-23 June 2017: European semester 2017*

The Council approved draft country-specific recommendations (CSRs) on the economic and fiscal policies of member states. These will be submitted to the June European Council for endorsement.

#### *Implementation of the stability and growth pact*

The Council adopted Council decisions and recommendations in the context of the excessive deficit procedure, closing the excessive deficit procedures of Croatia and Portugal, and the significant deviation procedure, recommending Romania correct a significant deviation from the adjustment path towards its medium-term budgetary objective.

[HCWS9]

### **EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **General Affairs Council: June 2017**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker):** My right hon. Friend, Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE, Minister of State for Exiting the European Union, has made the following statement:

The General Affairs Council (GAC) met in Luxembourg on Tuesday 20 June 2017. It was the last GAC under the Maltese presidency. I represented the UK.

The main items on the agenda were: preparations for the June European Council on 22 and 23 June; the eighteen-month programme of the Council; the European semester; and inter-institutional agreements with reference to the Commission's Work Programme.

A provisional report of the meeting and the conclusions adopted can be found on the Council of the European Union's website at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2017/06/20/>.

#### *Preparation of the European Council, 22 to 23 June 2017*

The Heads of the EU's 28 member states, the European Council President and the President of the European Commission assembled at the European Council meeting on 22 and 23 June 2017. To prepare for this meeting, the General Affairs Council examined the second draft of conclusions on the proposed agenda items for the European Council. The agenda included: security and defence; migration; the Paris climate accord; jobs growth and competitiveness; external relations; and digital Europe.

On security and defence, the discussions at the General Affairs Council focused on the European Defence Fund and permanent structured co-operation, to enable member states to develop capability on security and defence matters. Ministers also discussed counter terrorism proposals.

On migration, the Council discussed: internal migration; external migration; measures to address the central Mediterranean route; and the need to work with countries of origin.

On jobs, growth and competitiveness, the Council debated how to secure free and fair trade: the use of defence instruments. Ministers also discussed their ambitions for the single market; the Capital Markets Union; the services sector; and the Digital Single Market.

Ministers were informed that during the external relations discussion, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission would update the European Council on recent meetings and summits and leaders would reaffirm their commitment to the Paris Climate agreement.

I intervened to thank colleagues for all the messages of support after the recent terror attacks in London and Manchester. I confirmed that the UK was broadly content with the language on defence but that the proposals on counter terrorism should go further to include references to data retention as a vital tool to fight terrorism.

I underlined the need for a strong EU commitment to free trade and also supported all those who called for ambition and implementation on services, the Digital Single Market and single market strategies.

#### *Eighteen-month programme of the Council*

The Council endorsed, without any deliberation, the eighteen-month work programme devised by the incoming Estonian, Bulgarian and Austrian presidencies of the Council of the European Union. The programme will run from 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2018.

#### *European semester*

The Council approved the country specific recommendations of the European semester, which is the EU's cycle of economic and fiscal policy co-ordination, for endorsement at the June European Council.

#### *Inter-institutional agreements*

Ministers had a brief exchange of views on the proposals for the 2018 Council Work Programme. The proposals will be formally introduced with the publication of the Commission's Letter of Intent on 13 September.

The UK also lifted its reservation on the mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework that had been in place during the purdah period and the file was adopted.

[HCWS11]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### British Indian Ocean Territory

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** On 22 June, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution at the instigation of Mauritius seeking an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago, which the UK administers as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Fewer than half of the General Assembly's 193 members voted in favour of the resolution (94 countries); 15 voted against it, 65 abstained and 19 did not vote. We are disappointed that this bilateral dispute is being taken to the International Court of Justice. This is an inappropriate use of the ICJ advisory mechanism because it is an attempt to circumvent the principle that no state should be compelled to have its bilateral disputes submitted for judicial settlement without its consent, not least on matters of sovereignty. This is a matter for the UK and Mauritius to resolve bilaterally.

We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago and we do not recognise its claim. We have, however, made a long-standing commitment to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. We stand by that commitment.

We created BIOT for defence purposes and, in 1966, concluded with the United States of America an agreement for joint defence use of the territory. Our current agreement lasts until 2036. We cannot now predict what our defence purposes will require beyond that point. BIOT plays an active role in regional and global security and defence, to the considerable benefit of the UK, US, other allies and regional partners.

We have engaged in good faith in discussions to try to resolve the issue bilaterally. The UK Government have made significant proposals to Mauritius which respect and recognise their long-term interest in the Archipelago. We have offered, without prejudice to our sovereignty, a framework for the joint management, in environment and scientific study, of all the islands of the territory except for Diego Garcia, and we have offered enhanced bilateral security co-operation. These offers were relevant to the dispute and were seriously made. We are disappointed that the Government of Mauritius chose to reject them and to walk away from bilateral talks and instead decided to use multilateral mechanisms.

The UN resolution also mentions the very important matter of the Chagossians. We are currently designing an approximately £40 million support package, to improve Chagossian livelihoods in the communities where they now live: in Mauritius, the Seychelles and the UK.

The UK will continue to defend robustly our sovereignty over BIOT.

[HCWS10]

## JUSTICE

### Justice and Home Affairs Council: Post Council Statement

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Dominic Raab):** My noble Friend the Justice Lords Spokesperson (Lord Keen QC of Elie) has made the following written statement.

“A meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council took place on 8 and 9 June in Luxembourg. The Council took place on the day of, and the day after, the General Election. I represented the UK for Justice day. The UK’s Permanent Representative to the European Union, Sir Tim Barrow, and Shona Riach, Home Office Europe Director, represented the UK for Interior day.

#### *Justice day*

The Council agreed a number of proposals without discussion on Justice day, including a number of Council conclusions on areas including returns, children in migration and information exchange and information management including interoperability solutions.

Justice day began with the participating member states agreeing a general approach on the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) under enhanced co-operation. The UK has always been clear that we will not participate.

A general approach was achieved on the supply of digital content directive. However, some concerns on a specific article remained; trilogues under the Estonian presidency are likely to come back to these issues. I expressed the UK’s support for the presidency’s compromise.

There was a policy debate on the European Commission (Commission) proposal for a provision on hearing the views of the child in parental responsibility cases arising from the Brussels IIa regulation. There was broad support for such a provision. The Commission urged member states to make progress as it would help resolve the problem of refusal of recognition and enforcement of judgments on the basis that the child had not been heard. The UK agrees that refusal of recognition and enforcement of judgments is a problem but I asked that member states keep options open going forward, rather than committing to a provision now.

For the insolvency directive, the presidency presented the Maltese presidency’s paper on the role of national courts in restructuring procedures and the principle that debtors should remain, in whole or in part, in possession of their business. The UK supports the directive and I welcomed the direction of travel on both issues. The presidency concluded that member states had shown support on both issues and work would continue at the technical level.

There was then a discussion on the money laundering directive, for which a general approach was achieved. The UK has not opted in to this proposal.

The presidency reached a general approach on the recast of Regulation 45/2001, which regulates the processing of personal data by EU institutions and bodies, and was being re-cast to bring it in line with the wider EU data protection package. As the proposal has not yet cleared parliamentary scrutiny in the UK, I did not give a position.

Over lunch, EU Ministers discussed ways of countering illegal hate speech online. The Commission updated the Council on the second progress report on co-operation with internet service providers. EU Ministers expressed support for the Commission’s work in this area. The Government views co-operation with internet service providers as an important step in the collective work to reduce harm caused by hate online, and I suggested producing a toolkit to help small platforms to apply the same standards as bigger providers.

After lunch, at the start of a joint session of Interior and Justice Ministers, the Council held a one minute silence to remember those killed and injured in the Manchester and London Bridge terrorist attacks. I then provided an update on the attacks. I noted the quick and effective response from our emergency services and that the investigations were ongoing. I also thanked Ministers for the many messages of condolence, and stressed the need to work together to combat radicalisation and deprive extremists of safe spaces to operate online.

The Council then moved on to discuss Criminal Justice in Cyberspace, covering e-evidence, data retention and encryption.

For e-evidence, the Commission presented a number of practical measures as well as possible legislative approaches for improving cross-border access to electronic evidence. The Government agree we must be able to bring to justice cross-border crimes planned, facilitated or committed online irrespective of where the electronic

evidence is stored. I underlined the importance of this agenda, in particular for bringing terrorists to justice and set out practical action which could help. The presidency concluded that the Commission should continue to seek expert input whilst developing legislative proposals.

For encryption, the Commission presented an update on the challenges caused by end-to-end encryption for law enforcement, as well as the technical and legal issues.

For data retention, the presidency provided a brief update on discussions held so far in the friends of the presidency group on data retention. The Government have played a leading role in the group and fully support these discussions as a way of building an evidence base for the necessity of retention.

The final discussion on Justice day was focused on safeguarding children involved in irregular migration to Europe across the Mediterranean. EU Ministers agreed that protecting children at all stages is a priority and endorsed the need for a comprehensive approach to migration.

#### *Interior day*

Interior day began with the agreement of a general approach on the European Travel and Information Authorisation System (ETIAS). As the UK is not part of the border control aspects of the Schengen agreement, it will not take part in this proposal.

This was followed by a policy debate on the Second Generation Schengen Information System (SIS II) proposals. There was broad agreement among EU Ministers that the SIS II could be used for entering preventive alerts on children at risk of abduction and disappearance, with the caveat that clear definitions were needed. There was also some support from EU Ministers on the creation of a new alert on the SIS II for ‘inquiry checks’ against suspected criminals or terrorists.

There was then a general discussion on actions to address the migration crisis, with a focus on the EU-Turkey agreement and the Central Mediterranean. Member states were encouraged to take an active role in implementing the Malta declaration.

Over a working lunch focused on Counter Terrorism, there was a progress update on the work of the Counter Terrorism Group followed by a presentation of fiches on data sharing with EU agencies from Counter Terrorism Co-ordinator Gilles de Kerchove. There was also a discussion on proposals to bring together the various European bodies responsible for countering radicalisation, including the Radicalisation Awareness Network and the European Strategic Communications Network.

The afternoon session began with a debate on key operational practices and obstacles of returns policy and the use of visas as leverage. It was concluded that member states would need to work together on returns and readmission and that the next step would be to look at where and when leverage should be used.

There was then a discussion on information systems and interoperability, following the final report of the High Level Expert Group on data sharing (HLEG). The HLEG’s priorities were highlighted, including a shared biometric matching service and a common data repository, while the need to improve data quality, implement PNR and improve co-operation with Europol and Interpol were common themes in discussion.

Finally, there was an update on negotiations on the seven legislative proposals on the Common European Asylum System. Of these measures, the UK has only opted in to the recast Eurodac Regulation.

Over both days the Estonian delegation set out their priorities for their presidency of the Council of the EU, which begins in July. The fight against terrorism and serious crime will continue to be a priority. ECRIS will remain a priority file, as will criminal justice in cyberspace and data retention. The incoming presidency will prioritise safeguarding Schengen and free movement in the face of terrorism and mass migration, meaning that the asylum package, the Valletta Action Plan, returns, and the Blue Card directive will be priority files, as will work on radicalisation, interoperability of EU information systems, the Entry Exit system and ETIAS. Prüm, Passenger Name Records (PNR) and a renewed mandate for EU LISA will also be high on the agenda, as will co-operation between the EU and Ukraine.”

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