MAY WARNS AGAINST SCOTTISH EU HOPES AHEAD OF MERKEL TALKS

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Theresa May warned on Wednesday (20 July) that Scottish plans to somehow remain in the EU despite the UKs Leave vote were impracticable.

The new British prime minister made her remarks at her first Prime Ministers Questions before flying to Berlin on her first trip abroad in her new role.

May met Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister, last week in Edinburgh to discuss the pairs conflicting view on the post-Brexit scenario.

Scotland voted to stay within the EU at the 23 June referendum, as did Northern Ireland and Gibraltar, whilst England and Wales voted out.

Despite campaigning for a Remain vote, May has since declared that Brexit means Brexit.

Sturgeon, meanwhile, has mulled various options for Scotland to stay in, or keep some of the benefits, of EU membership, whilst although threatening that pulling Scotland out of the EU would trigger the circumstances for a possible second independence referendum.

Scotland voted 55%-45% to remain in the UK in 2014, but 62% to 38% to remain in the EU last month.

Angus Robertson, leader of the Sturgeons Scottish National Party in the Westminster parliament, pointed out to May the backing of Germanys Deputy Chancellor, Sigmar Gabriel, for Scotland remaining in the EU, as well as some members of the Bundestag.

May replied explicitly that some ideas coming out of Scotland are impracticable.

I did discuss the arrangements in relation to the negotiations for the UK leaving the EU with the first minister. I was very pleased my first trip was a trip to Scotland and I was able to do that so early in my premiership. As Ive been very clear the Union is very important to me, she told MPs.

I was also clear with the first minister that I think that there are some ideas being put forward that are impracticable but I am willing to listen to the options that are brought forward and we will be engaging fully with all the devolved administrations.

That may suggest she is buying time by the talks with Sturgeon and also Northern Ireland and

Gibraltar, which also voted to remain – before triggering Article 50.

But she will be under pressure from Merkel perhaps the EU leader most inclined to give May breathing space – to trigger soon in 2017, as the French, and others, want a decision quickly.

David Cameron, before leaving office, had got agreement with other 27 EU heads of government that a decision on triggering Article 50 could be left to his successor in September.

However, the timetable for selecting a new Conservative Party leader and prime minister, was abandoned after May was elected unopposed last week.

May has previously stated Article 50 would not be triggered until the new year.

Gabriel had told the Neue Osnabruecker Zeitung at the weekend that the EU would accept Scotland as a member in its own right if the country leaves the United Kingdom and wants to join the EU.

And he went further at a European conference of his Social Democratic (SPD) party in Berlin on Saturday (16 July), saying Brexit was not irreversible. Im sure that historically this is an episode rather than an epoch, he said.

May travels on from Berlin to Paris, to meet with President François Hollande, emphasising how at this stage Brexit pre-negotiations are being conducted at a head-of-government level with the key players, rather than through the Commission or Council axis.

Technically, no pre-negotiations are supposed to take place before Article 50 is legally notified.

http://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/may-warns-against-scottish-eu-hopes-ahead-of-merkel-talks/

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