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## **BREXIT TO BE DIFFICULT PROCESS LIKE NO OTHER - CROATIA PRESIDENT**

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Reuters

Croatia's president called for the country's new government to adopt an outward looking stance on Tuesday and said she expected Britain's negotiations to leave the EU to be long and difficult and required a tailor-made deal.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic named Andrej Plenkovic, head of the Croatia's conservative HDZ party, as prime minister-designate on Monday.

Plenkovic now has just under a month to win parliament's approval for his cabinet and must quickly work out a way to spur modest growth of about 2 percent in order to manage high public debt at about 85 percent of GDP and unemployment of 13 percent.

Speaking at the London school of economics Grabar-Kitarovic said she hoped the new government would confront the choice now facing many European countries of whether to be an open or a closed society by firmly remaining open.

"I believe that finally Croatia will redirect the focus of the political debate within the country from the past to the future," she said.

She added the new government would need to improve the Balkan country's economic position but also tackle emotive issues like housing and attracting back its citizens, especially the young.

"We educate them, we invest in them and then they invest into some other country's economy," said Grabar-Kitarovic.

As the newest member to the European Union, the Croatian president said that Britains referendum vote in June to leave the bloc was a "great shock" but also a "wake-up call," to those countries that remain in the club.

She was speaking after meeting UK Prime Minister Theresa May as well as Queen Elizabeth II and predicted the divorce negotiations between the UK and EU would be lengthy.

"It will be a process like no other with far reaching consequences - its final scope no one can predict with absolute certainty," she said.

"It is not only about trading arrangements and access to the EU's single market ... it is also about preserving our joint and unique culture, our decades of strategic partnership and our commitment to the same shared values. This relationship needs to be tailor-made."

(Reporting by Marc Jones; Editing by Bernard Orr)

By Adela Suliman

Photo: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May (L) greets Croatia's President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic at Downing Street in London, Britain October 11, 2016. REUTERS/Neil Hall

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-croatia-government-eu-idUKKCN12C003>

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