
SPAIN'S PM SÁNCHEZ SAYS BREXIT EXTENSION WAS 'BEST POSSIBLE DEAL'

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Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Thursday that the agreement to extend the United Kingdom a six-month extension to Brexit was the best possible deal.

Sánchez made the comments after traveling to Brussels on Wednesday to take part in the Article 50 Extraordinary European Council at which the Heads of State and Government tackled the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union.

In response to the request from the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, regarding an extension to the withdrawal period, the EU-27 agreed to offer an extension until October 31, 2019. If the British Parliament ratifies the Withdrawal Agreement before that date, the withdrawal will become effective on the first day of the following month.

Early on Thursday morning, the European Council reiterated that this extension cannot affect the normal functioning of EU institutions, which means in practice that the UK must take part in elections to the European Parliament if it does not ratify the Withdrawal Agreement before May 22. If the United Kingdom does not uphold this obligation, states the Conclusions, the withdrawal will take place on June 1, 2019.

During this extension period, the United Kingdom must act constructively and responsibly in accordance with the obligation on loyal cooperation established in the EU treaties and taking into account its status as an outgoing Member State. This means that it must abstain from adopting any measures that endanger the aims of the EU, particularly as regards decision making. The European Council will assess the situation at the end of the month of June.

The EU-27 underlined that the Withdrawal Agreement is not open for re-negotiation since, said Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, it was subject to long and complex negotiations and contains a balance of concessions that makes it the best possible deal.

The leaders expressed their disposition to make adjustments to the Political Declaration on future relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union, with the sole limitation of respecting the European Union's autonomy to take decisions and its four fundamental freedoms, explained Pedro Sánchez, whilst making it clear that future relations would not be open to discussion during this extension period.

In his statement at the end of the Council meeting, Spain's PM Sánchez highlighted that the most important aspect is safeguarding the unity of the EU-27, and that an agreement has been reached with the British Government that offers it sufficient room to negotiate with the main opposition

party – the Labour Party.

The European Union is taking the high ground, with a generous perspective and commitment to ensure the best possible relations with the United Kingdom following its departure and clearly demonstrating our political nous and disposition in endeavoring to avoid a disorderly Brexit, with negative social and economic consequences for the United Kingdom and for the European Union, said Sánchez.

Sánchez conveyed a message of calm to the Spanish people, because in the event of a no deal withdrawal, the government has done its homework and adopted the necessary contingency measures through a Royal Decree-Law. For Sánchez, the great lesson to be learned from what is happening in the United Kingdom is that when you propose leaving decision-making processes in the hands of citizens based on lies, you drive society, in this case British society, up a cul-de-sac.

According to Sánchez, what the European Union must do is be aware of the immensity of the challenge facing British society and try to facilitate an agreement. The date is not the be-all and end-all; what is important is facilitating as much time as British politics needs to find a way out of the situation deriving from the referendum held three years ago.

Kaynak/Source: