Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel has issued a get tough message to Britain, saying it "cannot have its cake and eat it too."

On Monday, Michel told the Belgian press that he was "not out for revenge, but we need to let the British see that they have had a pyrrhic victory."

His comments come after the UK voted to exit the EU in last Thursday's referendum.

He said, "In February, we accepted Prime Minister David Cameron's request for the UK to be given a number of exemptions. Now they have voted for a Brexit these can be consigned to the waste paper basket. You can't have your cake and eat it too. There is no turning back."
"They need to realise that they have made a choice for the future of the United Kingdom and not for the future of the European Union."

Speaking in an interview with the daily Het Laatste Nieuws, the francophone liberal also said that British companies that feel threatened by the Brexit referendum result are "more the welcome" to relocate to Belgium.

In another new development, US secretary of state, John Kerry, warned in Brussels on Monday that the UK's departure would have "consequences" demanding "sensitive, thoughtful, responsible and strategic" leadership.

He was speaking at the start of three days of frantic diplomacy to contain the fallout from Britain's historic leave vote.

After meeting the EU's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, he said the US would do everything it could to make the transition "as sensible as possible". But Kerry, who was flying on to meet the British foreign secretary Philip Hammond in London, stressed the divorce would have consequences.

"Does that mean it doesn't present difficulties? No. There are challenges. Does that mean it is without any impact? No. Clearly that is not possible either, because there are consequences."

He also warned all concerned to keep their heads, saying it was "absolutely essential that we stay focused on how, in this transitional period, nobody loses their head, nobody goes off half-cocked."

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, meanwhile, is facing calls to resign as he is being blamed for the Brexit vote.

Czech foreign minister Lubomir Zaoralek said that Juncker was a 'negative symbol' of precisely the kind of federalism that British voters had rejected in the referendum.

"In my opinion, he is not the right person for that position. We have to ask who is responsible for the result of the referendum in Britain," Zaoralek said on Czech TV.

Juncker, a former Prime Minister of Luxembourg who has been dogged by rumours of ill health, has insisted he will not stand down.

Elsewhere, German EPP group member Werner Langen cautioned against punitive action against Britain, telling this website, "It cannot be the primary goal to hurt the UK. There are too many interests at stake and both sides have a lot to lose.

"However, the UK has decided to leave the European Union hence they have to bear the consequences, which should be managed in an objective and consistent way. That is not possible
from one day to another."

About the author

Martin Banks is a journalist for the Parliament Magazine

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