

Syed Kamall: EU must decide if Brexit deal is for European peoples or European project

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News

EU negotiators must decide whether they want a Brexit deal that prioritises people or the European project, Syed Kamall said.



Syed Kamall | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

Parliament's ECR group co-Chair, Syed Kamall, told the European Parliament that voters were watching to see whether politicians were capable of putting the interests of ordinary people ahead of their own.

He said, "Voters, citizens and workers don't care about legal technicalities, they don't sit at home hoping the UK is made an example of. They simply want both sides to sort it out."

“They want to keep making a living, keep selling their products, keep their jobs, keep travelling and keep safe.

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“So, quite simply, the EU needs to decide whether this is a deal for the European peoples or a deal for the European project.”

Kamall was taking part in a European Parliament debate on last month’s EU summit at which it was agreed to move Brexit talks onto the second phase, when the withdrawal agreement and the future UK-EU trade relationship will be discussed.

He insisted the goal of both sides must be to secure a unique, mutually advantageous deal.

“While the UK asks for a bespoke deal, EU negotiators are asking which template. But we all know that while a specific trade deal may act as a template for others, no two trade deals are exactly alike. After all, the Canada-EU agreement was bespoke.”

He added, “The ECR group believes that this is a question not limited to Brexit but a fundamental question about the very future of the EU.

“Is the EU serving the needs of its peoples? Is the EU offering solutions to the core challenges its member states face? Could the EU do less, but do it better?”

Meanwhile, also addressing Parliament, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker suggested that EU funding for cross-border peace projects on the island of Ireland would continue post-Brexit, saying, “I see no more important use of our new budget than guaranteeing and financing the peace process in Ireland.”

On Britain’s decision to leave the EU, he said, “I still feel the exit of Britain is a catastrophe. A defeat we all have to take responsibility for. But the reasons for the British exit lie deeper. As Prime Minister Theresa May has said, the British never felt at ease in the EU and for 40 years they haven’t been given the chance to feel more at ease. That is why the blame is on many.”

Juncker echoed earlier comments, saying, “If the British people, the British Parliament, the British government, wish for another way than Brexit, we would be prepared to discuss it. We are not throwing out the British, we want them to stay. And if they want to, they should be able to.”

He concluded, “Be it as it may, once the British have left under Article 50 there is still Article 49 which allows a return to membership and I would like that. I would like us now to treat each other with respect and not abandon each other.”

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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