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PES Foreign and European Affairs Ministers react to the UK referendum

On 23 June, a majority of the people who voted in the referendum in the United Kingdom have spoken out against EU-membership.

We regret this outcome. The United Kingdom has been a respected member of the EU since 1973. It has always been our aim to continue our work with the government and the people of the United Kingdom on a more prosperous and more secure Europe within the context of the Union.

The Treaty of the European Union provides a withdrawal clause through article 50 it is now crucial that the British government follows up on the referendum result and activates it at the fastest possible track.

As there is to be a changed relationship between the EU and the U.K. in the future, we will make sure the process towards it will be swiftly, orderly, predictable and transparent. This process should start as soon as possible. Ensuring that both sides, work constructively together, in a coordinated manner, and identify key sectors of mutual interest that need to be safeguarded.

Today, Europe is faced with huge challenges that require a better European Union: creating jobs and growth, guaranteeing security and handling migration flows, promoting and strengthening the rule of law, empowering and protecting citizens, and ensuring energy security and sustainable climate policies. These challenges take place against a backdrop of growing instability and geopolitical changes at our European borders.

In this light, we strongly reaffirm our joint commitment to the European Union, firmly believing that Europe is successful when we overcome narrow self-interest in the spirit of solidarity. Discontent and demand for change with the functioning of the EU as it is today is a challenge we must tackle. We take this very seriously and are determined to create a EU which better equips for the future our citizens and companies alike.

To this end, we will update the European priorities before the end of 2016 to strengthen the EU's role in meeting the challenges of this new century, guarding peace and prosperity for its citizens and as a force of good in the world.

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