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Association of European Journalists 'Future of UK-EU Relations beyond Brexit' debate

28th September 2018, Europe House, London

1) The forces that led to the Brexit vote

- Three broad buckets
 - o Specific to the UK (i.e. history with the EU; longstanding parliamentary opposition) but other speakers much better placed to discuss that.
 - o Forces which are more broadly applicable:
 - Middle class crisis – growing inequalities
 - Territorial inequalities
 - Frustrations with the perceived slowness and in-effectiveness of democracies
 - o Questions – legitimate or not – about the structure and efficiency of the EU
 - Institutional structure of the EU: distance from the citizens?
 - Efficiency of the EU policymaking
 - Euro-crisis
 - “Democratic deficit”

Chair intervention: Paris is the toughest party on the 27 side.

- Every European negotiation, countries tend to hide their position behind other Member States. It is wrong to assume that the French have had the harshest position. EU 27 unity (albeit maybe with different priorities)
- France and the UK have always accused each other of being the toughest negotiations in all negotiations. Lazy and easy analysis and reporting.

2) your direct experience of the political tensions and human distress arising from the Brexit vote among your TWO 'constituencies' [French residents in the UK / Northern Europe and the En Marche government of Emmanuel Macron which you represent .]

- European residents in the UK fundamentally anxious about Brexit:
 - o Fact-based: i.e. essential rights jeopardised
 - o Immaterial: emotional distress – Brexit has destroyed the image of the UK in the eyes of many.
- The rights of European citizens in the UK will be maintained if there is a deal according to the Withdrawal Agreement's disposition.
- If there is no deal, Theresa May has said she will protect the right of European citizens in the UK nonetheless. France, through a future bill enabling the Government to take executive decisions, will similarly protect the rights of British citizens in the UK.

Should be the fundamental priority of both sides.

3) Please outline your personal 'prospectus' or manifesto for a benign and healthy future relationship between the UK and the EU

- The French President has always said that the best possible relationship was to be a

member of the EU, but also that the door remained open for the British.

- But as we respect the will of the British people, we will seek the best relationship possible with the UK while being firm on one aspect: we will not undermine the essence of our Union.
- On topics such as defence cooperation, the UK EU relationship but particularly the Franco British cooperation are crucial to the security of our continent. I am confident, as the President said during the Sandhurst summit, that we will remain the closest ally and defence partner.