European Union

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"Keep Our Citizens Safe" - EU Parliament approves Brexit mandate

EFA Press release from SNP MEPs Ian Hudghton & Alyn Smith

The SNP Members of the European Parliament **Ian Hudghton MEP** and **Alyn Smith MEP** have today (Wednesday) voted, with heavy hearts, to approve a European Parliament negotiating mandate in response to the UK commencing the Article 50 process to leave the EU.

The mandate is not about the merits of Brexit, but about the response of the EU institutions to it. The Resolution makes explicit reference to Scotland, in Recital N, and recognises the pro-EU vote in Scotland.

MEP Alyn Smith

The Resolution was adopted by 516 votes to 133 with 50 abstentions. There were a number of proposed amendments but the text was approved unchanged, giving the Parliament a strong and united negotiating mandate as the talks start in earnest.

Alyn Smith, speaking in the debate, said:

"As a Scottish European I've long wondered how I'd feel today, and the answer is I'm heartbroken. Not for myself but for the people I serve, for future generations.

"Scotland will not be silent in this process as our rights are taken away by an administration we do not support, by a vote we clearly rejected, and a process that is demonstrably against our interests.

"While being heartbroken, I'm also angry.

"I'm angry at this process. I'm angry at the way the UK is representing itself, doing a bad thing badly.

"Colleagues, Mrs May and Nigel Farage do not speak for Scotland, do not speak for me, do not speak for 48% of the UK population.

"The UK is not one bloc, much as Mrs May would like it to be. The UK is a complex set of varied interests, all of which are better reflected in this resolution than in anything the UK government has put forward to date.

"Scotland will not be silent in this process, and Scotland's top priority – in the words of our First Minister Nicola Sturgeon – is to keep our citizens safe. Scotland is your home. You are welcome here.

"I appreciate that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed but please colleagues, let's make our citizens feel safe. Our citizens from the UK in other countries, and from other countries in ours. Let's deal with that first, let's deal with it fast, let's deal with it now."

Ian Hudghton said:

"We're content that this resolution opens a door to allow for consideration of Scottish interests, as well as being reasonably balanced on the future direction of talks.

"We were part of the negotiations in drafting it, so we supported the text and abstained on all the various mischief making amendments put down by UKIP. It is telling that Tory MEPs supported a number of them, dancing yet again to UKIP's tune.

"For Scotland's future, we do not want a hard Brexit, represented by Theresa May and a government that will trade away our interests - if they can make a coherent point at all.

"Barely a week since the Article 50 letter was delivered and we have heard more Tory nonsense on Gibraltar than we have any sort of strategy. Scotland can do better. Voters in Scotland must have a new opportunity to choose a different future, as a normal independent country."

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