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People must be at the heart of Brexit process

EFA MEPs comment on Brexit debate in European Parliament

The European Parliament has approved a resolution recommending that the Brexit negotiations move to phase two.

MEPs emphasised that the UK government must respect the commitments already given in order for progress to be made in the next phase, and that outstanding issues will need to be resolved in order for the Parliament to give its consent to a final agreement.

President of the EFA Group in the European Parliament, **Josep-Maria Terricabras** said:

"It's good that sufficient consensus has been reached to proceed to the second phase but significant challenges remain and we will have to continue working hard to resolve all of the outstanding issues.

"There are important issues to resolve around citizens' rights and of course ensuring that commitments entered into by the UK government with respect to Ireland will be fully implemented, and that decisions of the Court of Justice remain binding.

"We will need to reach an agreement on all of these and other issues which will then need to be reflected in a legally binding withdrawal agreement."

EFA MEPs **Jill Evans** (Plaid Cymru) and **Alyn Smith** (SNP) both spoke in the debate at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** said:

"We have said from the very start that people must be at the heart of this process. I must protect the best interests of all my constituents in Wales, including those who have chosen to make Wales their home and have contributed so much to our country.

"I also have to protect the interests of those who have chosen to make their home in other EU countries. It is unacceptable that people are still uncertain and anxious about their futures.

"The negotiations need to move forward, but not at the expense of citizens' rights, so agreeing progress cannot

mean that all issues are resolved or closed. They are clearly not and they need to remain a priority.

"This is not the final vote on this; there is a lot still to be done.

"Looking to the future for Wales and building our economy, maintaining access to the single market is critical to protect jobs and our agricultural industry. That is what I will continue to work for. Diolch."

SNP MEP Alyn Smith said:

"I will be supporting the resolution this afternoon in the votes.

"I do so with a sense of real sadness, and not a little anger, both personally and on behalf of the people I represent.

"Scotland did not want this. Scotland voted against this. This is not in Scotland's name.

"But we do need – and I say it through gritted teeth – to move on to Phase 2 of the negotiations. For too many people in the UK, Brexit remains white noise, a false equivalence aided by an industrial-scale spin machine telling us that somehow we'll have our cake and eat it; it will be alright on the night because we're special, we're British.

"People need to see the detail. The line by line, the policy by policy, the nitty-gritty. People need to see what they're going to lose for Brexit to become real.

"In Phase 2, the promises of the shysters and charlatans who have so disgraced themselves in their conduct even today in this debate will be shown as what they are. A cruel deception on the people they claim to serve.

"This is the end of the beginning of this Brexit negotiation. I look forward to Phase 2 where we'll hold them to account."

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Jill Evans

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Josep Maria Terricabras

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

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