

FIRST MINISTER VISIT TO BRUSSELS 29 JUNE 2016 NOTES OF MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

MARTIN SCHULZ, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The **First Minister** set out the detailed position of Scotland after the EU referendum the previous week and that the vote in Scotland had produced a result where she felt it would be undemocratic for Scotland as a nation to be forced to leave the EU. She explained what Scotland was seeking to achieve i.e. to remain within the EU and wanted to ensure that all options for achieving this would remain open and that she was not seeking commitments at this time. She sought the President's views on the role of the European Parliament in the negotiations.

President Schulz explained that there was no previous experience relating to how a Member State might leave the EU under Article 50. The European Parliament would be asked to give its consent to the agreement reached between the UK and the other 27 Member States and would work with the European Commission as the discussions take place. Ratification would be along the same lines as a Trade deal. Like President Juncker he was not in favour of informal discussion in advance of notification under Article 50.

President Schulz expected that as long as the UK remains part of the EU then UK MEPs would retain the same rights as MEPs from other Member States. He thought there may be a need to review how this works when discussions were taking place on the negotiations with the UK. He indicated that he thought the Parliament would operate along the same lines as Council would where the rules under Article 50 precludes the Member State withdrawing from participating in the discussion of the European Council or Council in decisions concerning it.

President Schulz expressed sympathy and understanding of the situation Scotland found itself in. He explained in his view that the way forward for Scotland was, at this stage, an internal matter for the UK. While the European Parliament has to deal with the UK under the Treaties he was happy to meet with the First Minister and would have agreed to do so no matter the result in the referendum.

There was a short discussion on what the next steps would be following the referendum and options for reviewing the result. It was accepted that there would be significant political difficulties in revisiting the result of the UK-wide referendum and that this was not in the gift of the Scottish Government.

The **First Minister** concluded by emphasising that we are in uncharted territory and that she hoped that as the process developed an open mind can be kept to ensure that options for Scotland are not closed off. President Schulz indicated a willingness to keep in touch and would be happy to make a visit to Scotland and speak to young people at a Scottish University in the near future.

MEETING WITH GIANNI PITELLA, GROUP LEADER OF S&D

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Scotland was seeking to achieve i.e. to remain within the EU and wanted to ensure that all options for achieving this would remain open. She explained that the UK does not speak with one voice, but is one Member State. She explained that the purpose of her visit was to help people understand the implications of the vote for Scotland and look at possibilities to help Scotland remain in the EU.

Mr Pitella expressed the view that he did not want to see Scotland leave the EU and hoped that in the next months it may be possible for the situation in the UK to change. He would like to keep in touch with the First Minister and offered support where he could provide it.

MEETING WITH MANFRED WEBER, GROUP LEADER OF EPP

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Mr Weber set out his view that the problem for the UK is in London and not Brussels. At the moment he felt that national leaders across the EU are looking for stability and that any deal with the UK on access to the Single Market must include freedom of movement. It was important for the EU that the UK referendum did not lead to a domino effect amongst some Member States. He asked what could he do to ensure the Scottish voice is heard. The **First Minister** in response said that reminding the Parliament of the result of the vote in Scotland and that the country wants a different outcome.

MEETING WITH GUY VERHOFSTADT, GROUP LEADER OF ALDE

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Mr Verhofstadt expressed the view that he felt there should be a special arrangements with the UK to allow Scotland to be part of the EU. He did not think that we were yet at a point where Scotland needed to decide its position as part of the process. He thought that very few countries wanted to start informal talks with the UK although those with economic ties such as Holland may be more receptive. He thought this was an opportunity to talk about the EU as a whole and needs Germany, France and Italy to set out a positive vision.

MEETING WITH REBECCA HARMS AND PHILIPPE LAMBERTS, JOINT GROUP LEADERS OF GREEN & EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE

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Ms Harms and Mr Lamberts were interested in what would happen next in the UK should the change in Prime Minister lead to a General Election. They wondered if a majority in favour of Remain was in the House of Commons if that would counteract the referendum vote. The First Minister explained that the current situation in Westminster added to the uncertainty and it was not possible to predict what may happen following the appointment of a new Prime Minister.

MEETING WITH SCOTTISH MEPs – IAN DUNCAN, IAN HUDGHTON, DAVID MARTIN, ALYN SMITH AND CATHERINE STIHLER

The **First Minister** explained the purpose of the visit and the positive responses she had received from those she had met in the European Parliament. During the discussion it was noted that everyone was willing to work together to protect Scotland's position and the importance of keeping all options open at this time.