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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3634th Council meeting

General Affairs

Art. 50

Brussels, 20 July 2018

President **Gernot Blümel**
Federal Minister for the EU, Arts, Culture and Media of
Austria

P R E S S

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

none

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED**Brexit negotiations: state of play**

The Council (Article 50), in EU27 format, was briefed by the EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier on the state of play in the Brexit negotiations. The chief negotiator informed the ministers about where the negotiations stand regarding the work on withdrawal issues to finalise the draft withdrawal agreement, including the backstop solution for the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as about the discussions on future EU-UK relations.

Ministers confirmed the importance of the strong unity of the 27 and insisted on the need to deploy all efforts so that the withdrawal agreement can be concluded as soon as possible, with an operative legal solution to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland.

Regarding future relations, ministers underlined that work must also be accelerated with a view to preparing a political declaration on the framework for the future relationship. The Council discussed how the policy paper published by the UK government on 12 July 2018 can feed into the discussions. In the light of the principles set out by the European Council, the negotiator will explore common ground between the EU and UK positions regarding the framework for future relations. The aim is to agree on a joint political declaration that will accompany the withdrawal agreement and be referred to in it.

The chief negotiator also presented to the ministers the recent Commission communication on preparedness. Ministers reiterated that the work on preparedness must be stepped up at all levels for the EU27 to be ready for any possible outcome, including a no-deal scenario.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED
