

NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL UNSUSTAINABLE: JOHNSON

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Europe, European Union (EU) and India

Boris Johnson TOBY MELVILLE

Post-Brexit trading arrangements in Northern Ireland are unviable and need urgent reform to unblock the province's power-sharing Assembly, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Tuesday.

Pro-U.K. unionists have vowed not to nominate Ministers to the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast until the protocol governing trade is scrapped.

That has raised the prospect of paralysis at the legislature, just days after Sinn Fein became the biggest party for the first time.

Mr. Johnson and his government have repeatedly risked confrontation with the EU by threatening to trigger a suspension clause in the protocol, which keeps Northern Ireland largely in the European single market.

But with fresh talks looming to iron out difficulties, Mr. Johnson told his Irish counterpart Micheal Martin in a call that the situation was now "very serious".

He told Mr. Martin that the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland after 30 years of violence "was being undermined", his office said.

Last week's elections "further demonstrated that the protocol was not sustainable in its current form", Downing Street said.

London's position, at least verbally, backs the unionists, who claim that Irish Sea border checks put Northern Ireland's place in the wider U.K. at risk.

Signed as part of the U.K.'s EU divorce, it imposes sweeping checks on goods heading from Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) to Northern Ireland.

The compromise was introduced to avoid the return of hard border infrastructure between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland to the south.

Keeping the border open was a key plank of the Good Friday Agreement.

The U.K. government has accused the EU of inflexibility, claiming that implementing the deal it signed to the letter is causing "economic and political disruption".

European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic, who is spearheading talks, has urged London to dial down the rhetoric after previously warning it risked a trade war if it acts on its own to pull the protocol.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com