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An alliance of northern European Coastal Chambers accounting for 70% of EU-UK trade urge British and EU negotiators to create clarity on a future trade friendly relationship as soon as possible now that sufficient progress has been made.

The Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce represented by Voka - Flanders Chamber of Commerce and BECI - Brussels Chamber of Commerce, the British Chambers of Commerce, Chambers Ireland, the Danish Chamber of Commerce, the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Netherlands-British Chamber of Commerce have today handed over a joint statement to the British and EU Brexit negotiators. They urge the British and EU negotiators to strive for a breakthrough in the first phase of the negotiations to ensure talks on transition and the future EU-UK trade relationship can start as soon as possible.

Countries from the northern European coastal area have always maintained exceptionally good trade ties. Trade between the United Kingdom and the other 6 European Union countries in this area amounted to 344bn EUR in 2016, accounting for 70% of the total EU-UK trade. The English Channel, located in the middle of the North Sea area, is for example the world's busiest shipping lane, with more than 500 vessels passing through the strait on a daily basis, as well as being a key transport link between the EU and Ireland. A sudden and chaotic disruption of trade in this region would have a substantial economic impact that should not be underestimated.

The northern European Coastal Chambers were therefore pleased to learn last Friday that sufficient progress has been made in the first phase of the Brexit negotiations. The Northern European Coastal Chambers now call on the United Kingdom and the European Union to move on to discussing the outlines of a future trade friendly EU-UK relationship that fully respects all aspects of the integrity of the Single Market as soon as possible.

The northern European Coastal Chambers also believe a realistic transition period is needed to provide time for companies to adapt to the new EU-UK trading relationship. A status-quo like transition period - announced with sufficient notice - ensuring the UK remains in the customs union and the Single Market for the duration of the transition period, with all the appropriate rights and obligations, would be best to provide business with the highest possible degree of certainty and predictability.

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