

**STATEMENT ISSUED BY LORD DAVID OWEN ON THE EVE OF THE UK'S EXIT FROM THE EU
FRIDAY 31 JANUARY 2020**

I will celebrate with the all-Party Vote Leave referendum campaigners on Friday evening and in particular with those who spent the last three and a half years, at personal cost in time and money, dealing with the Electoral Commission and those who tried to use the law in the hope of overturning the people's decision.

I will not be celebrating Theresa May's ill-conceived, badly executed and long drawn out negotiations, which are still not complete.

To leave the EU involves many choices, some beneficial, some painful and many inevitable. This summer we will have, in theory, a choice of whether or not to extend the negotiating period. The new government has made that a legislative choice to emphasise that they do not intend to extend. I welcome that clarity.

Sadly, it looks as if M. Barnier is preparing to table a position which seems designed to be rejected. Unlike Donald Tusk's readiness to offer a Canada-like Free Trade Agreement this appears to have been withdrawn and an FTA is being offered like no FTA ever negotiated, freighted with elements already ruled out like involvement of the ECJ and a common rule book.

Also it will be including fishing which has, as far as I am aware, not ever before been included in an FTA. If this is the negotiating offer then I hope the government will withdraw from the negotiation in the summer giving at least six months for preparation and avoiding a cliff edge negotiation.