

Start Brexit negotiations as soon as possible: Francois Hollande urges Britain

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London: French President Francois Hollande has urged Britain to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty that allows a nation to leave the European Union.

Theresa May and Francois Hollande

Hollande, who met British PM Theresa May in Paris on Thursday, said that he respects Britain's decision to leave the EU and the country should begin Brexit negotiations as soon as possible.

"The United Kingdom has decided to leave the European Union and we respect that decision. We would like to be reflected in the best possible timescale to open a negotiation to establish what will be the relationship between the UK and Europe," he said.

The President, however, recognised the new government needed time to prepare but stressed, "The sooner the better."

"For France, the sooner the better. There cannot be discussions or pre-negotiations before the negotiations, but we can of course prepare these negotiations and we can understand that your government, that's just been formed, needs this time," Hollande said.

He said uncertainty was the greatest danger and also repeated France's argument that Britain could only get access to the single market if it accepted the free movement of people.

"It will be a choice facing the UK -- remain in the single market and then assume the free movement that goes with it or to have another status. That will be the subject of the negotiation," the President noted.

The newly appointed British PM had yesterday said that the UK will not start exit talks with the European Union until "our objectives are clear" and that won't be this year.

"All of us will need time to prepare for these negotiations," she said.

Britain had last month voted to exit the 28-member group.

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