**Roberto Gualtieri (S&D).** – Madam President, for the second time, the UK Government has not been able to find a positive majority in the House of Commons. It has been a big mistake not to try to bring all the forces in the House together in the interests of the country. Instead, the UK Government has decided to appease the Tories’ hard Brexiteers, a strategy that backfired spectacularly last night.

Mr Henkel, you are wrong. As Michel Barnier said, the EU has always been a fair, transparent and constructive partner in this negotiation. We have done all we can to guarantee an orderly withdrawal of the UK that protects citizens. We have a specific and particular responsibility to keep protecting all the European citizens in this process and to preserve the peace process in Northern Ireland.

We have also taken into account, of course, the UK Government red lines. Let me repeat this: this is the only withdrawal treaty that is possible and the only one that could command an approval in this House. So what’s next?

First, we still trust the UK parliamentarians today to reject a no-deal Brexit. That would be catastrophic for the UK. Second, we need a clear direction on how, concretely, to avoid the no deal scenario. We always said that a closer EU-UK relationship based on a customs union would not only benefit our economies, but would also solve many of the concerns associated with the backstop. It is time to stop party politics and to work constructively in the interests of citizens and the country and if this is not possible, it is clear that the only alternative is to give the people the chance to change the government or to say no to Brexit.

This is the debate we need to have, not the debate on the length of the extension. This, for us is clear: the extension is a tool and all the options are on the table as long as there is a clear political reason and perspective. We will keep working constructively, openly and responsibly, including our UK citizens, who remain European citizens.