DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on International Trade

on the recommendations on the negotiations for a new partnership with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2020/2023(INI))

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on International Trade, as the committees responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into their motion for a resolution:

A. whereas cohesion policy is a key instrument that ensures solidarity between European regions in exchange for the opportunities afforded by the internal market; whereas if regions are to access the internal market, they must make a contribution to the cohesion funds – as is the case for European Economic Area (EEA) countries;

B. whereas many regions of the EU will be negatively affected by the creation of new barriers to trade between the EU and the UK, particularly those sharing a land or sea border with the UK, and will thus require additional support from cohesion funds;

C. whereas even if the UK is a third country, it would be advantageous for Interreg programmes between EU and UK regions to continue;

D. whereas cohesion funding is of special importance to Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland, as the PEACE programme has played a key role in community reconciliation and peacebuilding;

E. whereas the withdrawal of the UK without a subsequent agreement on its future relationship with the EU would have disruptive effects, creating a significant burden for public finances in the EU; whereas such a failure to reach an agreement on future EU-UK relations would justify activating the solidarity principle; whereas Parliament has already approved activating the solidarity principle in such a scenario;

1. Considers that the UK should be invited to contribute to the cohesion funds if it wishes to participate in the internal market, in accordance with the model for EEA countries;

2. Believes that the new agreement should take into account the needs of the regions affected by Brexit, especially those sharing a land or sea border with the UK, such as the border regions of Ireland and the coastal regions along the Channel and the North Sea;

3. Notes that the cross-border and transnational programmes funded through Interreg play a key role in encouraging cooperation between regions in different Member States, and proposes that Interreg programmes should remain open to the UK in future, provided that a financial contribution is made;

4. Stresses that, whatever solution is found for cohesion funding in other regions, it is of the utmost importance that the PEACE programme continue to operate in Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland, administered autonomously by the Special EU Programmes Body;

5. Recalls the importance of extending the scope of the European Union Solidarity Fund to cover a part of the additional public expenditure incurred in preparation for, or as a consequence of, the end of the transition period without a subsequent agreement on the
UK’s future relationship with the EU; calls on the Commission to put forward a proposal on the matter, mirroring the proposal previously made to cover a failure to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, which was approved by Parliament on 24 October 2019. 