

No Brexit talks until 'our objectives are clear': British PM Theresa May

21/07/2016 21:21 by admin

Berlin: Newly appointed British Prime Minister Theresa May has 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.

Theresa May and Angela Merkel

At her first meeting with an EU leader and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin, May conveyed a desire to work together with a concrete idea of how the complex divorce process will play out.

May said Britain won't invoke Article 50 of the EU constitution, triggering formal exit talks, this year.

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

On the other hand, Merkel signaled that Germany was prepared to wait.

"It is up to the British government to define its principles for the EU exit and also to trigger the necessary steps. It is only then that negotiations for the exit can take place," Merkel said.

"Nobody wants a long-term stalemate" but it was reasonable to give Britain time to prepare carefully," Merkel added.

A week ago May replaced David Cameron, who resigned in the wake of Britain's decision to leave the 28-nation bloc.

May's office said her first foreign trip, which also includes a visit to French President Francois Hollande, will help forge "the personal relations that will pave the way for open and frank discussions in the months ahead."

May said that while she doesn't underestimate the challenge of negotiating the British exit, she firmly believes "that being able to talk frankly and openly about the issues we face will be an important part of a successful negotiation."

The thorniest issue is likely to be the trade-off between access to Europe's single market which the British economy relies on and control of immigration. EU leaders are unlikely to give Britain full access to the market unless it accepts the EU principle of free movement of people among member states.

Facing her first weekly prime minister's question session in the House of Commons today, May did not answer directly when asked if Britain would be willing to leave the single market in order to guarantee migration controls.

- With AP Inputs