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Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union

Thank you for getting in touch with me about last Thursday's referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. I have been approached by many constituents on this matter and I should like in this response to address the various points made to me.

I appreciate your disappointment with the result – a sentiment shared by many others across the country. The reality of the situation, however, is that the vote to leave the EU exceeded the vote to remain by over one million. It is very difficult to argue with such a clear statement from the British people.

The referendum served to gauge the views of the country, although the Prime Minister has made abundantly clear throughout the whole process that he would view the result as an instruction from the British people. My understanding is that that is also the stance of his potential successors on the Government benches, of the Government as a whole and of Her Majesty's Official Opposition. Having asked the public for their verdict, it is now for political leaders to give effect to their will.

Over 33.5 million people cast a vote last week which equates to about 72% of the electorate. Turnout at this level has not been seen since the 1992 General Election – widely seen as the apex in terms of voter turnout in recent years. It is difficult to argue that turnout was too low and that the overall result was not convincing. No matter which side of the argument won, it was inevitable that there would be people left disappointed. That is the nature of debate, elections and referendums. It is fundamentally undemocratic to argue that the process should be re-run because the outcome was not what some people wanted.

I am afraid, therefore, that arguments over turnout, the majority, or the accuracy or otherwise of statements made throughout the course of the campaign do not invalidate the result. It is now for the Government to negotiate the basis of our future relationship



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with the European Union. You can rest assured that Parliament will debate and scrutinise the approach taken by the Government.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me and I am sorry if my response was not what you sought. The future relationship between this country and the EU will naturally be the subject of ongoing discussion in the period ahead.

John Bercow