《脱欧谈判在布鲁塞尔开启 到结束还有20个月》

Brexit Secretary David Davis launches a first round of negotiations on Britain's withdrawal from the European Union on Monday when he meets the EU's Michel Barnier for four days of talks between their teams in Brussels.

A month after a first meeting where the two exchanged gifts inspired by a shared passion for hill-walking and spoke of the mountain of complexity they must climb, the Frenchman will press Davis to agree to Britain covering substantial British financial commitments and offer more details on other British proposals.

British Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Brexit Secretary) David Davis leaves 10 Downing Street after a cabinet meeting in central London, July 11, 2017. /VCG Photo

With little more than a year to settle divorce terms before Britain leaves, deal or no deal, on March 30, 2019, the 27 other EU national leaders want British Prime Minister Theresa May to rally her divided nation swiftly behind a clear, detailed plan that can minimize economic and social disruption across Europe as its second biggest economy cuts loose from the continent.

"We made a good start last month, and this week we'll be getting into the real substance," Davis said in remarks prepared for delivery ahead of the meeting.

"Protecting the rights of all our citizens is the priority for me going into this round and I'm clear that it's something we must make real progress on."

Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker at the front door of 10 Downing Street on April 26, 2017 in London, England. /VCG Photo

Negotiators will break into groups discussing four key areas of priorities before a planned news conference on Thursday.

Barnier, who secured Davis' consent last month to the EU's broad structure for talks, wants to hold the Englishman publicly to whatever else has been agreed during the week, EU officials say.

Working groups will focus on three areas: citizens' rights; the EU demand that Britain pays some 60 billion euros (70 billion US dollars) to cover ongoing EU budget commitments; and other loose ends, such as what happens to British goods in EU shops on Brexit Day.

Customers browse cloths as signs advertise pound sterling prices above clothing rails on a stall in Petticoat Lane market in London, UK, on July 14, 2017. /VCG Photo

A fourth set of talks, run by Davis and Barnier's deputies Oliver Robbins and Sabine Weyand, will focus on curbing problems in Northern Ireland once a new EU land border separates the British province from EU member Ireland to the south. Some of that will have to wait for clarity on future trade relations.

One key early advance that EU officials hope for this week is for Britain to stop challenging the principle it will owe Brussels money – though how much will have to be argued over and cannot be calculated until Britain actually leaves.

Three more weeks of talks, interspersed with internal EU sessions to coordinate the views of the 27 other governments, are scheduled, from late August until early October.

(Source: Reuters)