



Environmental Audit Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Sir Bill Cash MP
Chair, European Scrutiny Committee

By email

24 March 2020

Dear Sir Bill,

The EU's mandate for negotiating a new partnership with the United Kingdom

I am writing in response to your letter of 11 March about the EU and UK mandates for negotiating the future relationship. Based on work undertaken by this Committee in the last Parliament, there are two areas of vital national interest where I think your Committee should seek further clarity from Government about the proposed future relationship.

The EU and UK mandates provide limited detail on the regulation of chemicals under any future trade agreement. Both the UK and EU indicate a desire to maintain high standards of protection for human health and the environment, but it is unclear how this will operate in practice. The UK Government mandate suggests that the UK is seeking a parallel regulatory framework, outside the current REACH arrangements. We would welcome further clarity from the Government about whether it intends to seek associate membership of REACH. If this is not the case, it is vital that the EU and the UK provide information to businesses about how data sharing and reciprocal recognition of standards will operate, given the complex data ownership arrangements and the prevalence of cross-border supply chains in this sector, and given the requirements under the Northern Ireland Protocol for Northern Ireland to maintain compliance with REACH and the wider EU Chemicals framework.

More broadly, both mandates contain commitments to maintain high standards of protection for the environment, and it is welcome that the UK Government intends to at least maintain existing environmental protections. We would however welcome further information from the Government about whether it believes arrangements proposed in the Environment Bill to establish the Office for Environmental Protection will be sufficient to meet the EU's expectations for future governance of environmental protection, namely to be overseen by a transparent system for effective domestic monitoring, reporting, oversight and enforcement of obligations. It would be interesting to know the Government's view on whether disagreement over this element of environmental governance will impact the parties' ability to agree a comprehensive free trade agreement.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP
Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee