



International Trade Committee

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Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State
Department for International Trade
King Charles Street
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AH

30 March 2020

Dear Elizabeth,

I am writing to you regarding the work of your Department in respect of COVID-19 (novel Coronavirus).

Both in the UK and among our trading partners, supply chains are coming under ever greater pressure, while at the same time patterns of demand are increasingly deviating from expected trading norms. Under these circumstances, it is crucial that the Government take decisive action to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 on international trade in relation to UK businesses and consumers alike. I am aware of, and welcome, some of the steps already being taken by your Department in this regard.

My Committee's role is to scrutinise the work of your Department with a view to improving policy outcomes for the whole of the UK. At a time of national crisis, where policy is being necessarily devised and delivered at considerable speed, this scrutiny role is of paramount importance. It is for this reason that my Committee is today launching an inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international trade.

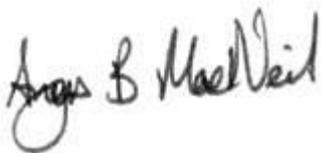
Accordingly, I would be grateful if you could provide me with answers to the following questions:

- What assessment has the Department made of the potential negative impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on UK businesses trading internationally, in the short-, medium- and long-term?
- What steps have been taken, or will soon be taken, both in the UK and in overseas posts, to mitigate the short-term negative impact of the pandemic on UK businesses trading internationally?
- What planning is taking place within the Department to mitigate the identified medium- and long-term negative impacts of the pandemic on UK businesses trading internationally?

- What consideration is your Department giving to counteracting disruption to trade in priority or essential goods that are required by businesses, consumers and public authorities?
- How is your Department working with the rest of central Government, as well as devolved, local and regional government, to deliver a coordinated response to the pandemic?
- How is the Department engaging with countries at the World Trade Organization, and bilaterally with trading partners such as the EU and the United States, to promote international cooperation and a coordinated global response to the pandemic?

I fully recognise the pressures your Department is facing at the present time and I intend for my Committee to fulfil its scrutiny role in as supportive and collaborative a manner as possible. I would be grateful, therefore, if you could respond to this letter by Wednesday 8 April to inform my Committee's work in respect of these issues.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angus B MacNeil". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Angus Brendan MacNeil
Chair of the International Trade Committee