

# European Scrutiny Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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**From: Sir William Cash MP**

6 May 2020

Ranil Jayawardena MP  
Minister for Trade  
Department for International Trade  
3 Whitehall Place  
London SW1A 2AW

## **Trade preferences for developing countries (Council documents 5949/20 and 6020/20) (41070 and 41072)**

We write in response to the letter of [15 April 2020](#) from your predecessor (Rt. Hon. Conor Burns MP) in which he confirmed the Government's intention to introduce a UK trade preference scheme for developing countries at the end of the post-exit transition period which "at least maintains the preferential market access" terms currently applied by the UK under the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences ("GSP").

We note the former Minister's commitment to promoting "universal human rights and sustainable development" globally. He made clear that the Government intends to retain a power to suspend a country from the UK's trade preference scheme in the event of systematic human rights violations which cannot be resolved through dialogue. He did not indicate if this conditionality (including a power of suspension) would also apply to labour rights, good governance and sustainable development, as is the case under the EU's GSP scheme. Nor did he tell us what form of monitoring and reporting the Government intends to put in place to ensure that any conditionality is effective. We ask you to fulfil his offer of an update once the details of the UK's GSP scheme are clearer. Your update should cover all elements of conditionality which form part of the UK scheme, the grounds for suspending a country from the scheme or temporarily withdrawing preferences, and details of the monitoring and reporting arrangements. We also ask you to highlight any aspects of the scheme which differ from the EU's GSP arrangements.

It is not clear from your predecessor's response whether the Government accepts that the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland may make it difficult, in practice, for the UK to apply a tariff rate that differs from the EU's GSP scheme. He highlighted the role of the Joint Committee and Specialised Committee on the Protocol, established by the EU/UK Withdrawal Agreement, in agreeing some of the detailed arrangements for implementing the Protocol. We anticipate that decisions taken by the Joint Committee may well have some "read across" to the administration of the UK's own tariff rates, including the UK's future trade preference scheme, and ask you to ensure that the update we have requested includes any relevant developments or decisions in the Joint Committee and Specialised Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. We also look forward to receiving further details of any improvements you make to the EU's GSP scheme in developing the UK's own scheme.

We are copying this letter to Sarah Champion MP and Fergus Reid, Chair and Clerk of the International Development Committee; Angus MacNeil MP and Joanna Welham, Chair and Clerk of the International Trade Committee; Simon Hoare MP and Nick Beech, Chair and Clerk of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee the Earl of Kinnoull and Christopher Johnson, Chair and Clerk of the EU Select Committee in the House of Lords; Edwina Osborne and Stephen Booth, your Departmental Scrutiny Coordinators; and Les Saunders and Donald Harris in the Cabinet Office.

**CHAIR**