



Committee on the Future Relationship
with the European Union
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The Right Honourable Sir Lindsay Hoyle
Speaker of the House of Commons

21 July 2020

The Right Honourable The Lord Fowler
Lord Speaker

Dear Lindsay and Norman,

We are writing to update you on interparliamentary relations with the European Parliament from next year and, as Chairs of the relevant Select Committees in the two Houses, to set out what we think should happen next.

We are copying this letter to the Government, which will need to take steps to ensure interparliamentary relations are considered in the current negotiations and suitable provisions included in a formal agreement. We hope that this will be done in a way that preserves flexibility, so that the nature and the extent of the dialogue can be determined by the two parliaments in due course.

The UK and the EU agreed, in the political declaration, that they:

"support the establishment of a dialogue between the European Parliament and the Parliament of the United Kingdom, where they see fit, in order for the legislatures to share views and expertise on issues related to the future relationship."

The European Parliament has adopted three resolutions calling for cooperation between the EP and the UK Parliament, including on scrutiny of the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement and monitoring of the implementation of the future relationship. Their most recent resolution welcomed the proposal contained in the European Commission's draft legal text on the future relationship for a 'Parliamentary Partnership Assembly', emphasising that the agreement between the UK and the EU should provide the formal framework for institutional arrangements.

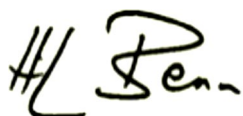
The Commission's legal text provides such a framework but perhaps goes further than is necessary at this stage. We feel it is important that provision is made for some form of Assembly but without prescribing its role or other arrangements at the moment.

The Government's paper on its approach to the negotiations on the future relationship and its draft legal texts are silent on inter-parliamentary relations, although it is clear from the evidence he gave to both our Committees that Michael Gove was generally supportive of some form of inter-parliamentary dialogue, while seeing this as a matter for Parliament rather than the Government. We agree with him that forming and maintaining the relationship is a matter for Parliament, and not the Government, but Parliament cannot do this without the support of the Government.

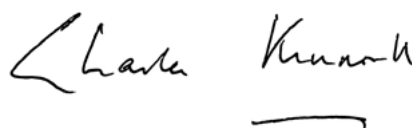
The European Parliament will form a delegation to the UK whether interparliamentary cooperation is addressed in any agreement on the future relationship or not. In the absence of an institutional framework it is likely that UK engagement in the relationship will depend on something akin to a friendship group; it will take a long time to develop and mature. We believe, in contrast, that the relationship is so important that it should be established on clear foundations from the outset.

We wanted to let you know about these developments, and would welcome any observations you may have. We urge the Government to ensure in the current negotiations that there is agreement on the legal under-pinning and a formal framework for the institutional arrangements necessary to support an effective inter-parliamentary dialogue from the start of next year and to provide the ways and means to support it. It will also be important that any UK delegation to the European Parliament or to some form of Assembly is properly resourced.

We are sending a copy of this letter to Michael Gove and David Frost so that the Government can take the action it needs to in the current negotiations on the future relationship. We are also copying our letter to Sir Bernard Jenkin and Lord McFall of Alcluith, as we feel this matter will be of interest to the Liaison Committees of both Houses, and to the Clerks of the Overseas Offices in both Houses.



Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Chair, Committee on the Future Relationship
with the European Union



Lord Kinnoull
Chair, European Union Committee