



Department for
International Trade



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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The Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith QC
Chairman
International Agreements Committee
House of Lords
London
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9 June 2020

Dear Lord Goldsmith QC,

Trade talks between the United Kingdom and Japan – Launch of Negotiations

Further to the Written Ministerial Statement the Secretary of State made on 13 May, I am pleased to inform you that we will be opening formal trade talks between the United Kingdom and Japan today.

Around 100 negotiators will be involved on the UK side and talks will take place intensively over the coming weeks and will be carried out initially remotely.

We embark on these trade talks today because both of our countries believe that the right response to the unprecedented economic challenge posed by coronavirus is to make international trade easier and fairer, not retreat into protectionism and state domination of the economy. Japan, like the UK, is a democratic market economy, committed to free trade, the protection of property rights and to upholding and strengthening the rules-based international system on which our security and prosperity ultimately depends.

Last year, UK trade with Japan was worth over £30 billion and 9,500 UK businesses exported goods to the country, helping to employ 2.4 million people across the UK. A successful agreement will see these numbers rise substantially in the years to come.

An agreement will benefit every nation and region of the UK, particularly London, Scotland, and the East Midlands. It is fitting to launch these talks in the same week that we announce our International Tech Strategy, since the UK, as a technology superpower, intends this agreement to set a new standard in the enabling of digital technologies and electronic commerce.

Japan is also the largest economy of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) countries and a natural leader of that organisation. CPTPP currently represents 13% of global GDP and would increase to more than 16% if the UK were to join. Our Free Trade Agreement with Japan will act as an important milestone towards the UK's accession to CPTPP, a goal which Japan fully supports.

We and Japan share a desire to have this agreement in force by the end of the year if at all possible and after commencing today our teams will move quickly to complete negotiations at pace. Our common goal is for this agreement to serve as the cornerstone of an even stronger relationship between our two great island nations for many years to come.

Of course, we will draw on the existing EU-Japan trade agreement where it makes sense for both sides to do so. It will go further and secure additional benefits in areas such as digital trade, and support for the UK's 5.9 million small businesses.

The Government is committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to information on our trade negotiations. We are committed to engaging collaboratively with Parliament, as well as the devolved administrations and the public as we negotiate future trading relationships. will provide further updates to Parliament as negotiations with Japan progress.

I look forward to working with your committee as they play a significant role in the scrutiny of our free trade agreements, as part of the UK's independent trade policy, and alongside the newly established International Agreements Committee in the House of Lords.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grimstone', written in a cursive style.

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