



Department for
International Trade



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt
Minister for Investment

Department for International Trade
King Charles Street
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AH

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E grimstone.correspondence@trade.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk/dit

The Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith QC
Chairman
International Agreements Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Dear Peter,

29 June 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 16 June, following our meeting on 10 June. I am committed to working closely with your Committee and continuing a constructive working relationship as we take forward the UK's independent Trade Policy.

I was pleased to be able to reassure your Committee that we are committed to transparency, using the comprehensive information we have published on our approach to US and Japan negotiations as an example. We will, of course, continue to keep Parliament updated on the progress of negotiations via regular updates.

You asked whether we intend to publish Parliamentary Reports for new FTAs as well as our continuity agreements. The purpose of our Parliamentary Reports for continuity agreements is to draw the attention of the House to any significant changes that have been made to the original text of the deal that the EU had with the country in question. As we discussed, my department will continue to produce Parliamentary Reports for all remaining continuity agreements.

This does not apply to new FTAs and, given we will be producing full impact assessments and explanatory memoranda and engaging in ongoing dialogue with your Committee on new FTAs, we do not believe it is necessary to produce similar Parliamentary Reports for such agreements. I would be happy to discuss this further to ensure that we understand the information that you would like to see and can consider that as we develop the suite of information that will accompany final agreements.

Regarding private briefings, at an appearance before the International Trade Committee (ITC) on 24 June the International Trade Secretary confirmed that we will hold private briefings where appropriate to discuss the progress of negotiations and any areas of interest with relevant Select Committees. I know that our respective officials are already discussing this as part of their regular dialogue and I would of course be happy to have a further discussion with you.

In terms of the Command Paper entitled "Processes for making free trade agreements once the UK has left the EU", this paper was authored and published by a previous administration prior to the election and thus in a very different context. This Government is committed to the key principles of transparency and effective scrutiny of our trade policy and has made, and delivered, its own commitments in this regard. This includes delivering many of the commitments from the previous paper, for example publishing objectives and initial economic assessments for our negotiations with the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

As confirmed by the International Trade Secretary to the ITC on 24 June, it is our intention to ensure that there is sufficient time for the relevant scrutiny committee to produce a report, should it wish to do so, before the final text of a trade agreement is laid before Parliament.

I have noted your ongoing inquiry and look forward to reading your report. I am content for your letter of 16 June and this response to be published as part of that report. If you wish to publish further information from our previous meetings I would appreciate a discussion beforehand.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grimstone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Grim" and the last name "stone" clearly distinguishable.

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