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17th January 2020

I would like to thank you and your Committee for the comprehensive and longstanding scrutiny of the Article 50 negotiations that you have provided, both under your chairmanship and that of your predecessor, Lord Boswell of Aynho. This scrutiny has informed Parliament's consideration of the key issues related to EU Exit.

The Committee's knowledge, expertise and experience was clearly reflected in both its reports *Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration* and *Beyond Brexit: how to win friends and influence people* published in December 2018 and March 2019 respectively.

Lord Callanan and I have written to you previously expressing the Government's commitment to respond to both reports, but making clear that it would be inappropriate to do so during live negotiations in which the Government was seeking to secure changes to the Withdrawal Agreement. I understand this position has caused some frustration in the House but the Government always wants to ensure that Select Committees are provided with the latest and most comprehensive information possible, whilst of course protecting its negotiating position.

Now that the Government has secured a revised Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration, and following the General Election on 12 December, I am very pleased to set out the Government responses to both reports.

In our responses, we have provided the latest Government position even where the Committee's recommendation related to the policy of the previous Government (including the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by the previous Prime Minister). We have done this to be as helpful as possible to the Committee and have made clear in our responses where this is the case.

Thank you for your further report of 10 January 2020 entitled *Brexit: the revised Withdrawal*

Agreement and Political Declaration which assesses the revised Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration that was presented to Parliament on 19 October 2019. I hope this will prove a useful resource for Peers to support their contributions during the passage of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill.

I would like to make clear this letter responds directly to the recommendations which seek action from the Government as outlined in the report *Brexit: the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration* published by the Committee on 5 December 2018 rather than your report of 10 January. However in doing so it reflects the current approach taken in the revised Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration. I trust that this response, and the revised report from your Committee, will assist the House as a whole as it continues to consider the Withdrawal Agreement Bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Barclay', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**THE RT HON STEVE BARCLAY MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION**