



Department for
Business & Trade

Nigel Huddleston MP
Minister for International Trade
Department for Business and Trade

Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY
United Kingdom

T +44 (0) 20 4551 0011
E huddleston.correspondence@trade.gov.uk
W gov.uk

Darren Jones MP
Chair, Business and Trade Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

8 June 2023

Dear Darren,

I am writing to inform you and your committee that the UK has today launched the Call for Input for the prospective Free Trade Agreement with the Government of Republic of Maldives (Maldives).

Maldives is one of the only remaining Commonwealth countries without preferential access to UK markets or with which the UK is not already pursuing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The UK is therefore looking to negotiate a bespoke, goods-only trade deal with Maldives that seeks to build on goods trade between the countries.

The launch of our Call for Input will give businesses, public sector bodies, individuals, and other interested stakeholders the opportunity to provide valuable feedback and highlight their priorities for a closer trading partnership with Maldives.

I would appreciate the assistance of your members in highlighting the Call for Input to businesses and other stakeholder groups with an interest to ensure we have as much information as possible to inform negotiations. The Call for Input can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-maldives-call-for-input>

The Call for Input will seek to ensure that our future FTA negotiations with Maldives are informed by the needs of stakeholders. The feedback we receive will be beneficial when shaping our mandate; it will inform detailed negotiation preparation and policy positions. The Department for Business and Trade is committed to ensuring future FTAs and their provisions are informed by stakeholder needs.

In line with the Secretary of State's earlier commitment to engaging with you before mandates are finalised, I would like to offer your committee a private briefing with our negotiations team to discuss our approach and emerging objectives and take soundings from the members of the committee.

The timescales to commence official negotiations with Maldives are yet to be confirmed, however, prior to talks commencing, we will publish a comprehensive document setting out our approach to these negotiations.

This will include: the strategic case for a UK-Maldives FTA; a scoping assessment providing a preliminary economic assessment of the impact of the agreement; a summary of the responses to the call for input and our negotiation-specific objectives for a UK-Maldives FTA. I will share these documents with your committee prior to publication.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nigel Huddleston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail.

Nigel Huddleston MP
Minister for International Trade
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