



Department for Business & Trade

The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
Minister of State for Trade Policy and Minister
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Department for Business and Trade

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20 November 2023

Dear Liam,

I am writing to update you and your Committee on the fifth round of negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between the UK and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). A Written Ministerial Statement will be laid in the House today.

The fifth round of negotiations for an FTA between the UK and the GCC took place between the 5 and 16 November.

The round was hosted by the GCC in Riyadh and held in a hybrid fashion. A number of UK negotiators travelled to Riyadh for in-person discussions with others attending virtually.

Draft treaty text was advanced across the majority of chapters. Technical discussions were held across 21 policy areas over 40 sessions. Good progress was made and both sides remain committed to securing an ambitious, comprehensive and modern agreement fit for the 21st century.

An FTA will be a substantial economic opportunity and a significant moment in the UK-GCC relationship. Total trade was worth £61.5 billion according to latest figures.

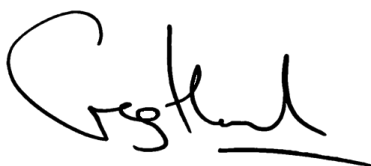
The sixth round of negotiations is expected to be hosted by the UK in the first quarter of 2024.

His Majesty's Government remains clear that any deal signed will be in the best interests of the British people and the United Kingdom economy.

I will continue to update you and your Committee as these negotiations progress. In this manner our Chief Negotiator stands ready to privately brief the Committee about the good progress made during UK-GCC FTA negotiations, particularly in specific chapters.

My Department and I are committed to being transparent and keeping Parliament appropriately updated on our ambitious trade agenda.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Hands', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
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