



Department for Business & Trade

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21 November 2023

Dear Liam,

In my session with your Committee on 19 September 2023, I committed to writing in more detail on my department's external engagement on trade.

The Government is pro-business, pro-enterprise and pro-innovation. We're committed to ensuring our engagement helps secure the best outcomes for the UK – both domestically and in international trade.

As I set out to the Committee, the department has evolved since the Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG) and Trade Advisory Groups (TAGs) were set up. It is important that our engagement channels evolve with it and harness the opportunities of the new department and our more mature FTA programme. It would not make sense for us to stand up the previous system in the same format. We have therefore been considering how we expand and deepen the channels we use to hear from business across all departmental priorities on the negotiations programme, but also on market access and helping businesses use FTAs and making sure business priorities are reflected in FTA implementation. During this review period, we have continued to engage a full range of stakeholders on trade policy.

I recognise the role external stakeholders – from businesses, to charities, to trade unions, to academics and more – play in ensuring we achieve the best outcomes for our ambitious trade programme. We are committed to ensuring we have the right structures in place for meaningful engagement and to drive growth across all sectors, regions and nations of the UK.

My Ministerial team and I will continue to lead the way, engaging domestic and international business leaders on driving economic growth through bespoke roundtables and bilateral meetings, focussed on our priority sectors.

We are building on that Ministerial engagement with official-level trade forums with expert stakeholders to enable two-way dialogue on our trade negotiations as they progress.

This will include a bimonthly DG Trade Update Forum, led by the Director General leading on Trade Negotiations, bringing together a group of senior businesses and other stakeholders, giving frequent and consistent opportunities to understand and help shape progress across the trade policy. There will also be a Civil Society Roundtable, to provide regular opportunities for this group to feed into our trade programme. We will also make use of round tables to get views from specific sectors, including Chief Negotiator sessions at key negotiation moments. We will also take advantage of the long-standing Sector Councils, with their combined domestic and international viewpoint, long-standing expertise and record of delivering with Government to hear from key UK industries.

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) must expand and deepen the invaluable dialogue between technical experts in DBT and in industry, working together towards policy solutions, as the FTA programme grows. We will update the way we do that, using technical forums led directly by the officials doing the negotiating. These will be convened on both a policy and sectoral basis – to close the gap between business and trade policy perspectives.

While the previous model has been under review, we have continued to engage stakeholders flexibly and we have not changed our formal process of consultation on new FTA negotiations, or our commitments to engage with Parliament.

I look forward to working with your Committee as we continue to implement and develop our evolved system.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the International Agreements Committee.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kemi Badenoch'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of 'Kemi' and 'Badenoch' being capitalized and prominent.

THE RT HON KEMI BADENOCH MP

Secretary of State for Business and Trade & President of the Board of Trade and
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