



Department for
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Minister for Investment and Minister for
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Dear Peter,

Trade Update: UK-Canada and UK-Switzerland Trade Negotiations

I am writing to update the Committee on the progress made by the department in trade agreement negotiation rounds with Canada and Switzerland.

UK-Canada Trade Negotiations

UK and Canadian officials undertook virtual negotiations from 27 November – 1 December. Discussions were held over 24 policy areas over 60 separate sessions. They included detailed draft treaty text discussions and good, steady progress was made in policy areas such as [Rules of Origin, Telecoms, Investment and Innovation. Additionally, Administrative and Institutional Provisions text was closed].

Both parties built on the momentum from agreeing in principle UK accession to CPTPP in March 2023. The UK-Canada trade relationship was worth £24.8 billion in the year to Q3 2022. A new and ambitious bilateral deal can strengthen already strong economic links between our two countries, boost the UK economy and bring benefits to UK businesses, and consumers.

UK-Switzerland Trade Negotiations

I understand that the Acting Chief Negotiator for the UK-Switzerland Free Trade Agreement provided a private briefing to the International Agreements Committee on 24 October, outlining progress following the second round of negotiations and discussing possible outcomes in goods, mobility and financial services.

The third round of negotiations on a UK-Switzerland enhanced Free Trade Agreement (FTA) took place from 27 November to 14 December.

During the round, which was held virtually, UK officials held technical, text-based discussions with their Swiss counterparts in a number of areas, such as procurement, investment, small-medium enterprises, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and animal welfare.

UK negotiators were able to make significant progress and agree draft treaty text across a number of areas. There were good discussions on services and investment, where the UK is working with the Swiss to provide long-term certainty and greater market access for UK-Swiss service suppliers, boosting bilateral trade in this area worth £23.7 billion.

In other chapters, negotiators used this round to greater explore differences to approaches and consider ways to address them, while delivering against negotiation objectives.

Overall, these discussions reflect the UK and Switzerland's shared ambition to agree a modern, comprehensive agreement, building on the current UK-Swiss trade relationship. Conversations are set to continue into Round 4, scheduled for spring 2024, where the UK side expects to continue productive discussions.

Summary


The Government's decision-making process for future trade deals considers various factors, such as the potential economic advantage, global economic patterns, and the feasibility of securing a high-quality agreement that aligns with the UK's national interests. The Government will only ever sign, and present to Parliament, a trade agreement which is in the best interests of the UK and upholds our high environmental, labour, public health, food safety and animal welfare standards, alongside protections for the National Health Service.

The Department values the important role that the International Agreements Committee plays in the scrutiny of the Government's ambitious trade agenda. Our department is committed to being transparent and keeping Parliament appropriately updated on our ambitious trade agenda.

I want to take this opportunity to reiterate the availability of the UK Chief Negotiator for the respective negotiations to brief you in private, should you wish.

I look forward to discussing these agreements with you in more detail in due course.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Johnson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Johnson of Lainston CBE
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