



HOUSE OF LORDS

International Agreements Committee

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Lord Johnson of Lainston CBE
Minister for Investment and Minister for Regulatory Reform
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building, Admiralty Place
London SW1A 2DY

12 March 2024

Dear Lord Johnson,

I am writing to you in relation to the correspondence sent to the Committee providing updates on trade negotiations and other matters. This is pursuant to the statement of Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, then Minister for Investment, on 7 December 2020 when he made a commitment on behalf of the Government to “keep Parliament and the public informed of progress for these negotiations through the publication of ‘Round Reports’.”

The commitment was reiterated in an exchange of letters between the Minister and the then Chair of the Committee Baroness Hayter dated 19 May 2022 to “publish updates at regular intervals”.

Whilst we are very grateful for these updates, the level of information provided in these letters is often sparse and minimal, mostly reflecting public statements issued by the Government. Sometimes these letters do not inform the Committee about the state of the negotiations beyond the basic fact that further discussions have taken place.

Information from the Government about the progress of negotiations provides important context for the Committee in carrying out its scrutiny of trade agreements. We believe that effective scrutiny is in the interests of both the Government and the public. We therefore invite you to consider how these letters can be made more informative.

We expect that some of this information about negotiations will be confidential. To the extent that this is the case, we would be happy to receive letters in confidence which would not be published on the Committee’s website. We recognise that you and your officials are more open with us in private briefings, but these take place only infrequently for each negotiation.

We would also welcome extending the time allocated for private briefings as there is much ground to cover in 30 minutes.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course. It may be useful for your officials to discuss the process for enhancing Round Negotiation letters with the Committee staff. Our Committee Clerk Rhiannon Williams may be contacted on 02072 194585 or williamsrb@parliament.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Goldsmith', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

The Rt Hon. the Lord Goldsmith KC

Chair of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee