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11th March 2024

Dear Liam,

Israel Trade Negotiations Update

I am writing to update you on the recent progress made in the United Kingdom – Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations during the month of February.

The fourth round of FTA negotiations between the UK and Israel took place between 19 – 29 February 2024. This round of negotiations was conducted in a virtual format.

During this round, officials held technical text-based discussions, across 12 policy areas in 26 sessions. The negotiations focused particularly on services, which are not covered by our existing agreement rolled over from the EU, and important given the UK is the world's second largest exporter of services.

These negotiations reflect our shared commitment to working towards a comprehensive deal and strengthen our existing trade relationship, worth £6.4bn in Q3 of 2023. A cutting-edge agreement with provisions covering services, innovation and digital trade would complement both our economies.

A fifth round of negotiations will take place in due course.

The UK will maintain its long-standing foreign policy positions in this FTA, including with respect to the internationally recognised borders of Israel; and will continue to exclude illegal settlements to ensure nothing in this FTA undermines the viability of a two-state solution.

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 final recommendation to Parliament for any agreement will only be made if it is in the best interest of the UK and upholds our rigorous standards.

We are committed to providing as much transparency as possible during live negotiations while also ensuring we protect our negotiating position. I want to reiterate my Department's pledge to offer the Chief Negotiators' availability to brief the Committee privately, if you would find that helpful. My office is ready to assist should you wish to take up the offer.

We will continue to keep you updated as negotiations progress.

Yours,


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