



Department for
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21 March 2024

Dear Liam,

Update following Round 4 of negotiations on a UK-Switzerland enhanced Free Trade Agreement

I am writing to update the Committee on progress made during the fourth round of negotiations on a UK-Switzerland enhanced Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which took place in Bern, Switzerland from 4 to 8 March 2024.

UK and Swiss officials took part in discussions covering 23 policy areas, enabling further progress to be made over the course of the week.

Talks continue to be constructive and positive, with both countries focused on achieving a modern and comprehensive agreement with ambitious outcomes, including areas such as services and investment, mobility, digital and the environment, which are not covered by our existing FTA.

Negotiations are now focussed on text-based discussions, and we have seen progress across many areas. We are pleased to announce the provisional closure of a chapter on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This chapter is in line with the UK's ambitious SME chapters agreed with Australia and New Zealand and will support UK SMEs to start or expand their trade with Switzerland. It is also the first SME chapter Switzerland has negotiated in a bilateral context and their most ambitious to date. We have agreed to work closely with the Swiss once the agreement is finalised to ensure that SMEs have the information and support available to access the benefits of the agreement.

Productive discussions continue with Swiss counterparts on services and investment. Both sides are largely aligned in discussions of these areas, with officials using the fourth round of talks to gain clarity and discuss nuances in text. This is an important path to enable both sides to move onto services market access negotiations in due course.

It is especially important for the UK that we achieve mobility outcomes, which are a top priority for business stakeholders in both countries and underpin any services and investment market access achieved in the FTA.

In other areas, we also continue to make progress in relation to market access. Discussions on procurement market access offers are underway, and negotiations will continue in the next round to ensure we improve on the market access we currently enjoy. The round also saw further discussions on Goods Market Access and the pathway to exchanging offers. We continue to be clear on the importance of ensuring that an enhanced FTA secures commercially meaningful market access for high quality UK producers.

We look forward to future further discussions between the UK and Switzerland to deliver our desired outcomes for the FTA. In these, and many policy areas, follow-up work has been agreed ahead of the next round. The fifth hybrid round of negotiations is expected to take place in early summer 2024.

The Department will only ever sign, and present to Parliament, a high-quality trade agreement which aligns with the UK's national interests, upholding 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 BTC Committee plays in the scrutiny of the Government's ambitious trade agenda. We are committed to providing as much transparency as possible during live negotiations and keeping Parliament appropriately updated while also ensuring we protect our negotiating position.

We will continue to keep you updated as negotiations progress. The UK Acting Chief Negotiator last gave a private briefing to the BTC in October 2023. The UK Chief Negotiator is looking forward to sharing more with the Committee directly at the upcoming private briefing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'G' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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