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31 October 2024

Dear Peter,

**Update following round 5 of negotiations on an enhanced Free Trade Agreement with Switzerland**

I am writing to update the Committee on progress made during the fifth round of negotiations on an enhanced Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the UK and Switzerland, which took place in London between 14 and 18 October 2024.

The talks were the UK's first with the Swiss since the Secretary of State for Business and Trade announced the government's intention to deliver the UK's FTA negotiations programme in July. A stronger trade relationship with Switzerland will contribute to growth, jobs and prosperity in the UK, providing long term certainty on UK business travel to Switzerland and helping data and ideas flow seamlessly between two world-leading services powerhouses.

Both countries are focused on negotiating a modern and comprehensive agreement with ambitious outcomes. During the recent round, talks took place on services, investment and digital, none of which are covered by the existing UK-Switzerland FTA.

Closer ties in services between the UK and Switzerland could deliver substantial benefits to the UK, given services accounted for almost 60% of our total £50.8 billion trade relationship in 2023. Financial services firms in particular stand to benefit from an enhanced FTA, as Switzerland is already the UK's 6<sup>th</sup> largest export market for the sector.

A stronger UK-Swiss trade relationship will contribute to creating growth, jobs and prosperity in the UK by protecting services trade and helping it grow in the years ahead, as well as deepening UK-Swiss cooperation and dialogue in areas of mutual interest that support growth.

Negotiations continue to be constructive, with both countries working towards agreeing ambitious outcomes in key areas, including services, investment and digital.

UK negotiators made good progress in this round and covered most areas of the negotiation, including but not limited to:

#### Services, Investment and Digital

Productive discussions were held on key technical issues, as we work towards consolidated chapter structures and texts. This will allow us to have further technical discussions on remaining issues, including but not limited to digital trading measures, investment liberalisation, and moving towards economically and commercially meaningful market access proposals.

#### Intellectual Property

Talks continued to advance this round on a number of technical rights areas, building on the existing high standards in international fora and in our respective domestic regimes.

#### Government Procurement

Overall, constructive progress has been made on the chapter text that builds upon the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA), of which we are both members. Discussions on economically and commercially meaningful market access are ongoing

#### Innovation

Negotiators continued discussions on ways to future-proof an enhanced FTA given the rapidly changing nature of the global economy and the need to respond and adapt to the trade opportunities and challenges that arise from innovation.

#### Goods, Trade Facilitation and Regulatory Environment

Negotiators exchanged market access offers on goods, with the aim of achieving commercially meaningful outcomes. We continue to press for further progress on key UK interests. Discussions continued on technical issues regarding the movement of goods between the UK and Switzerland.

Negotiators also covered issues relating to the overall functioning of a new agreement, as well as areas of future cooperation.

Round 6 of negotiations is expected to take place in Switzerland in early 2025. The government will continue to work towards delivering outcomes in the FTA that secure economic growth for the UK and will update Parliament on the progress of discussions with Switzerland as they continue to develop.

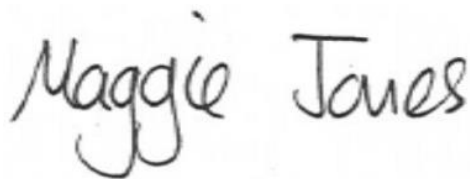
The government will only ever sign a trade agreement which aligns with the UK's national interests, upholding our high standards across a range of sectors, including protections for the National Health Service.

Round 5 has secured some important milestones, and my Chief Negotiator James Clarke is pleased to be able to attend an in-person private briefing on **5 November 2024** to provide the Committee with more detail on the discussions during the round and progress on negotiations more broadly.

I value the important role that the Committee plays in the scrutiny of the government's ambitious trade agenda. We will continue to ensure that Parliament is appropriately updated whilst also ensuring we protect our negotiating position.

We will continue to keep you updated as negotiations progress.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'M'.

**BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Legislation)  
Department for Business and Trade