



Department for  
Business & Trade

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**The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP**  
Chair, Business and Trade Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

24 March 2025

Dear Liam

**Update following round 6 of negotiations on an enhanced Free Trade Agreement  
with Switzerland**

The sixth round of negotiations on an enhanced Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Switzerland took place in Switzerland between 3 and 10 March 2025.

Economic growth is our first mission in government and FTAs have an important role to play in achieving this. We are seeking an enhanced FTA with Switzerland that guarantees market access for UK services suppliers, facilitates the seamless flow of data and ideas between two world-leading services powerhouses and provides long-term certainty on UK business travel to Switzerland. An enhanced FTA will contribute to growth and prosperity across the UK and build on our existing trading relationship with Switzerland. This currently supports 130,000 services jobs and more than £17 billion in services exports, including over £700m from Scotland and the North West.

The enhanced FTA is part of the UK government's approach to developing a comprehensive trading ecosystem with Switzerland, bringing our services sectors closer than ever before and providing new opportunities for businesses across the UK. The agreement will complement the UK-Swiss Agreement on Recognition of Professional Qualifications that entered into force earlier this year and the Berne Financial Services Agreement led by HM Treasury.

Good progress was made in all negotiation sessions, including but not limited to digital trade, financial services, goods market access and dispute settlement. Productive

discussions were held in relation to intellectual property, with further sessions scheduled later in the spring. Negotiators also provisionally closed two additional chapters.

### **Services, investment and digital**

The UK government's focus continues to be on agreeing ambitious outcomes in services, investment and digital trade which are not covered in the existing UK-Switzerland FTA. Good progress was made in financial services in particular, with both sides focussed on agreeing the most comprehensive chapter either country has signed.

On digital trade, provisions on data, source code and cryptography were discussed, with the UK continuing to seek ambitious outcomes. UK negotiators are aiming to minimise unjustified restrictions on cross border data flows and data localisation requirements, which would provide businesses in the UK and Switzerland with greater legal certainty.

We remain committed to seeking the deepest services market access that Switzerland has ever agreed and look forward to starting discussions on this shortly.

### **Goods**

Progress continued in talks around trade in goods, with discussions taking place on market access, focusing on securing outcomes that are commercially meaningful for UK exporters. 99% of UK exports to Switzerland by value are already tariff free, with the bulk of remaining Swiss tariffs in the highly protected agriculture sector.

As my Chief Negotiator explained during your private briefing session in Autumn 2024, we continue to work with key UK agricultural stakeholders regarding our negotiations to understand their priorities in this space.

On customs and trade facilitation, the UK and Switzerland provisionally agreed a chapter on transparent, predictable, and efficient customs procedures that help facilitate trade at the border. It includes commitments on the release of perishable goods that go further than Switzerland has agreed before in a trade agreement, and are in line with the UK's best precedents.

Both sides also agreed measures that promote the simplification of customs procedures and reduce administrative burdens for traders including through digitisation and automation.

Good progress was also made on rules of origin, with commitments agreed to make it easier for UK firms to trade with Switzerland, whilst locking in our strong pre-existing rules of origin arrangements.

### **Transparency**

Both sides reached agreement on a chapter that supports a transparent, stable and predictable environment for business. This includes commitments to promote transparency in government decision making by ensuring regulations are accessible and encouraging public consultations when designing regulations. This is the first time Switzerland has agreed to include a transparency chapter in a Free Trade Agreement.

## **Next steps**

Round 7 of negotiations is expected to take place in the UK in summer 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, alongside protections for the National Health Service.

I value the important role that the Committee plays in the scrutiny of the government's ambitious trade agenda. We are committed to being as transparent as possible during live negotiations and ensuring Parliament is appropriately updated whilst also ensuring we protect our negotiating position.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Alexander', written in a cursive style.

**The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP**  
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