



Department for
Business & Trade

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The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chair, Business and Trade Committee
House of Commons
London
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8 April 2025

Dear Liam,

**Update following Round 4 of negotiations on an upgraded Free Trade Agreement
with the Republic of Korea**

I am writing to update the committee on progress made during the fourth round of negotiations on an upgraded Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the UK and Republic of Korea (RoK), which took place in London between 10 and 21 March 2025.

Total trade between the UK and RoK was worth £15.3 billion in the 12 months ending September 2024. An upgraded FTA is intended to support growth in this trade and strengthen our broader strategic relationship with the RoK.

Specifically, an upgraded UK-RoK FTA will help secure and future proof current goods market access. Negotiators are also seeking to update the agreement in key areas where trade policy has progressed in recent years, including digital and services trade.

Discussion is also progressing on a range of areas where increased cooperation will futureproof our UK-RoK strategic relationship, such as commitments on supply chains.

Negotiators made good progress on a number of areas, including but not limited to:

Rules of Origin

Sides continue to make good progress on a new chapter, building on constructive discussions held virtually in February. Discussions covered both the chapter's main text and product specific rules (PSRs) for a range of sectors, including automotives, textiles and apparel, and food and drink. Sides are seeking to ensure the chapter accounts for current and future supply chains.

Digital trade

Further positive discussions were held on an ambitious digital chapter, including on commitments such as data, trade digitalisation and business safeguards. Additionally, the UK is seeking digital commitments that will help foster UK-RoK cooperation on a range of areas, such as emerging technologies.

Services and Business Mobility

The UK is seeking upgraded commitments to boost UK services exports to the RoK. This round included discussions on commitments to provide improved certainty and access for the mobility of business persons. Further discussions were also held on professional and business services and domestic regulation.

Trade and Gender Equality (TGE)

Negotiators made significant progress before the round towards agreeing ambitious TGE commitments. Commitments being sought here will help foster UK-RoK cooperation on specific areas, including improving women's access to global markets, financial resources and business networks, so that they can further benefit from trade.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Notable progress was made towards agreeing a new SMEs chapter. The outcomes being sought here will help SMEs access important information on the UK-RoK trading arrangement online and encourage cooperation between Parties to reduce trade barriers for SMEs.

Supply Chains and Customs and Trade Facilitation (CTF)

Good progress was made prior to the round to upgrade the existing CTF chapter. Good progress was made during the round towards agreeing new supply chains commitments. These will help cement ongoing UK-RoK cooperation on critical supply chains through mechanisms that facilitate government to government dialogue during supply chain disruptions.

Other Areas

Positive discussions were held across a range of further areas of the FTA including Anti-Corruption and the environment.

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.

The fifth round of negotiations is currently expected to take place in Seoul in the Summer of 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 the RoK as they continue to develop.

My Chief Negotiator, Adam Fenn, would be happy to meet with the Committee on **15 May 2025** to provide 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 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.

We will continue to keep you updated as negotiations progress.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Alexander', with a stylized, cursive script.

The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP
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