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Dear Liam,

I am writing to update you and your Committee that today we issued a Written Ministerial Statement to update Parliament on outcomes from the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which took place from 26 to 29 March 2026. I attended alongside the Minister of State for Trade, Sir Chris Bryant.

As foreseen in my previous letter to you on 17 March, MC14 took place against a complicated backdrop of geopolitical polarisation and fundamental tensions within the WTO itself. Delivering substantive outcomes at MC14 – commonly billed as a 'Reform Ministerial' – was always likely to be challenging due to long-standing polarisation around the topics under negotiation.

I am disappointed that, notwithstanding my delegation's hard work to deliver change, WTO Members were unable to reach agreement on several key issues. Work will continue in Geneva on outcomes which were close to agreement, with the next General Council (6-7 May) providing the first opportunity to assess what might be possible with the Membership.

In particular, Members will try to agree a way forward on WTO reform, and to reinstate the e-commerce moratorium which bans customs duties on electronic commerce. While a text was provisionally agreed on reform in Yaoundé, led by the UK and five other Minister facilitators, some Members linked agreement on this to a longer extension of the e-commerce moratorium which the UK and a majority of Members backed, but which a small number could not support, ultimately frustrating our collective efforts. The moratorium on Non-Violation and Situation Complaints (NVSCs) regarding the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Agreement (TRIPS) also lapsed.

To reduce the uncertainty of the lapse of the former for UK businesses, the UK has joined 22 other Members committing to continuing the E-Commerce moratorium between signatories until the next General Council (scheduled 6-7 May 2026). This is in addition to the permanent moratorium between the UK and 65 other Members provided by the plurilateral Agreement on E-Commerce which was launched at MC14, and for which the UK was a key partner in securing a positive outcome.

While some outcomes were agreed– recommitting to fisheries subsidies negotiations, reaffirming work to support small and vulnerable economies, and moving discussions on proposals around Sanitary and Phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade (SPS and

TBT) to technical committees – they were high-level and procedural. There were no outcomes on agriculture, or further measures to support Least Developed Countries (LDCs) graduating to Developing Country status, though work to reinvigorate agriculture discussions, and to progress support for LDCs, will continue in Geneva.

Despite the challenging circumstances, the UK contributed to key successes from the conference. On the plurilateral agenda, the UK was one of 66 countries who signed up to the first global digital trade agreement, the E-Commerce Agreement, which was launched on an interim basis at MC14. This is a significant step forward in global digital trade. Once in force, the Agreement will cut the cost of digital trade — making it cheaper, faster and more secure for businesses and consumers in the UK and worldwide.

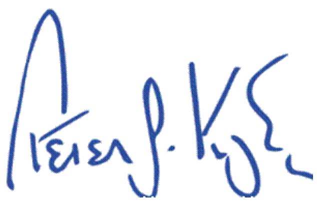
Additionally, the UK joined 128 other Members to issue a Joint Ministerial Statement on the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement. This statement set out a plan to take implementation of the agreement forward, regardless of the failure to agree incorporation of the agreement into the WTO legal framework at this Ministerial. I will therefore be taking steps that make it easier for British businesses to invest into developing countries and start enjoying the benefits of more digital trade and lower barriers as soon as possible.

The UK also announced £13million in technical assistance and capacity building support ahead of MC14 to enable developing economies to participate in the global trading system, and a further £1million already committed to the WTO Fisheries Fund.

Finally, despite disappointing outcomes from the conference, the UK's reputation as an influential actor in international trade was significantly bolstered due to the constructive role my delegation played. The Minister of State for Trade and I also held productive bilateral meetings with a broad set of countries including the US, the EU Commission, India, Germany, New Zealand, Pakistan and Argentina to name a few.

While the lack of agreed outcomes in Cameroon is dissatisfying, I would like to assure the Committee that the UK remains committed to making progress at the WTO. This includes seeking a comprehensive e-commerce moratorium, and driving forward work on WTO reform. The UK's communication on WTO reform (6 March) sets out our vision for a more relevant, flexible, and accessible WTO. We will work to pursue this, and I will write again to this Committee as and when there are further notable updates.

Yours sincerely,



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