



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

**The Rt Hon. Baroness Chapman of
Darlington**
Minister for International Development
and Africa
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Lord Johnson of Lainston CBE
Chair, International Agreements Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

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Dear Lord Johnson,

Thank you for your letter of 24 March, following up on the 16 March debate on the International Agreements Committee's report on treaty scrutiny. I was delighted to respond on behalf of the Government during the debate. The Government remains committed to a constructive and productive relationship with the Committee.

As you note, officials will continue working on the revised guidance and will stay in close touch with the Committee secretariat throughout. The revisions to the guidance will, among other things, focus on the importance of clear, early, and constructive communication between departments and the Committee, helping with effective work planning and enabling Parliament to make the best use of the time available for scrutiny. We will aim to conclude the process with an exchange of letters.

Turning to extensions of the scrutiny period, I do understand the strength of feeling on this point within the Committee. We do not agree, however, that there should be a presumption of a 21-sitting day extension; we think it is appropriate that where the Committee wishes to request more time it should set out its reasons for the additional sitting days in the particular case. Given the Committee's responsibility and expertise, however, the Government will of course give appropriate weight to such a request from the Committee. The revised guidance will make clear how decisions should be taken on extensions as well making clear that the Government will provide reasons for refusing any request.

I indicated during the debate that I would come back on the point raised about the scrutiny of multilateral and plurilateral treaties. I can confirm that the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 applies to multilateral and plurilateral treaties that are subject to ratification in the same way as it applies to bilateral treaties subject to ratification.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours ever,

The Rt Hon. Baroness Chapman of Darlington
Minister for International Development and Africa

