



Department for
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The Lord Alton of Liverpool
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Dear Lord Alton,

Thank you for your letter of 10 August regarding the Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) Review and the upcoming debate on the Joint Committee on Human Rights' (JCHR) report, *Forced Labour in UK Supply Chains*. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary of State, as the Minister responsible for the RBC Review.

Forced labour is an abhorrent abuse of human rights. As you know, this Government is strongly opposed to slavery in all its forms and expects companies to prevent, address and remedy forced labour in their operations and supply chains. The Government therefore shares the Committee's concerns about the presence of forced labour in UK and global supply chains.

The RBC Review considered a range of evidence, including the recommendations made in the Committee's report *Forced Labour in UK Supply Chains* which you set out in your letter. The Review has now been completed, and the Government is considering its findings.

As you outline, the Home Office are taking forward measures through the Immigration and Asylum Bill to strengthen the UK's response to modern slavery. The Bill includes reforms to improve compliance with section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. These measures will help improve accountability and provide greater confidence that businesses operating in the UK are taking meaningful action to identify and address modern slavery risks.

I recognise the Committee's interest in the risks of forced labour within clean energy supply chains. I want to assure you that we have worked closely with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to consider this as part of the RBC Review. The Government believes that progress towards our clean energy and net zero ambitions must not come at the expense of human rights. The Government is clear that the UK's ambitions for energy security, bill affordability, and clean power must go hand-in-hand with HMG's longstanding position towards protecting human rights domestically and in its supply chains.

You also asked about recent reporting on changes to Government Procurement. Human rights abuses have no place in public supply chains. The Procurement Act 2023 has strengthened the rules to combat misconduct and makes explicit provision to disregard bids from suppliers and subcontractors which are known to use forced labour or have been

convicted of environmental misconduct. This Government will continue to leverage its spending power to incentivise good practice and support economic growth.

I am grateful for your Committee's continued engagement on these important issues. Lord Leong will attend the debate on behalf of the Government in September.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anas Sarwar', with a stylized, flowing script.

ANAS SARWAR

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