



Department for  
International Trade



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

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28 June 2021

Dear Peter,

Thank you to your Committee for the document entitled 'Scrutiny of international agreements: Interim Partnership Agreements with Ghana and Cameroon.'

These trade agreements will support jobs and economic development in Ghana and Cameroon by providing tariff free access to our markets, encouraging export-led growth and employment. British consumers will also be able to access Cameroonian and Ghanaian goods, including bananas and cocoa, at competitive prices.

I hope you find this letter helpful in response to the points raised in the report.

### **Entry into force of our Trade Partnership Agreement (TPA) with Ghana**

In your report you note that:

*We regret the Government's failure to put in place a bridging mechanism from 1 January until the Agreement's provisional application, which would have avoided costly duties for Ghana's banana exporters.*

The TPA was signed on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 and entered into effect on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021. HM Government's aim was to conclude an agreement with Ghana before the end of the Transition Period, and our proposed draft text was on the same terms as the EU-Ghana Stepping-Stone Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). However, despite consistent attempts, Ghana did not engage in negotiations on this basis for over a year.

Between the end of the Transition Period and the agreement coming into effect, Ghana was eligible for preferential tariff rates under the United Kingdom's Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

HM Government could not use a bridging mechanism to maintain Ghana's duty free quota free access during this period, as negotiations on the agreement were ongoing. Nevertheless, once meaningful engagement was established, both sides worked at pace. We were able to minimise disruption to businesses by concluding negotiations in record time. As soon as negotiations were concluded and domestic processes on both sides finalised, the parties moved to provisional application of our deal, which restored Ghana's preferential trading terms.

We look forward to working with Ghana to fully realise the potential of this agreement to provide vital jobs and livelihoods, as well as strengthening our longstanding ties.

### **Regional integration in West Africa**

In your report you note that:

*We call on the Government to spell out whether it plans to seek a future trade agreement with the Economic Community of West African States to support regional integration in West Africa.*

The TPA replicates the effects of the EPA, of which we were part. This includes replicating provisions from the EPA on working towards a trade agreement with the West Africa region. In recent months we have raised this matter with our partners in the region, and we will continue to work on it together with Ghana.

### **Rights and Responsibilities in Cameroon**

In your report you note that:

*The human rights situation in Cameroon should be kept under review in relation to this Agreement. We call on the Government to set out the process it plans to monitor human rights compliance, including where allegations of human rights violations are raised that could put Cameroon in material breach of the 'essential element' provision in the Agreement.*

We are deeply concerned about the situation in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon and are monitoring the situation closely. Our longstanding relationship with Cameroon allows us to have open and candid discussions on these issues and to raise concerns directly with the Cameroonian government. In March of this year, the Minister for Africa travelled to Cameroon and met President Biya, Prime Minister Ngute and Foreign Minister Mbella Mbella to push for a peaceful resolution to the crisis and an end to the violence. We will continue to call for an inclusive dialogue which addresses the root causes of the crisis.

We also continue to respond to the situation within multilateral fora. We have urged the Cameroonian government to work with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and have called for impartial investigations to hold those who violate human rights to account.

Beneficial growth and support for democratic principles are not mutually exclusive. More prosperous countries tend to be more secure and peaceful. As a development focused agreement, the EPA provides vital access for Cameroonian businesses and supports some of the most vulnerable people in Cameroon. By encouraging trade, we are championing mutually beneficial growth, providing valuable employment, and supporting long-term poverty reduction.

### **Consultation with Devolved Administrations within the United Kingdom (DAs), and the administrations of the Crown Dependencies (CDs) and Overseas Territories (OTs)**

In your report you note that:

*We repeat our previous recommendation that the Government's EM should include information about any significant issues of concern raised by the Devolved Administrations (and others) and how they have been addressed, or alternatively confirm that no significant concerns have been expressed.*

Whilst such communication are necessarily confidential, any issues raised across the programme are taken seriously and considered carefully.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) leads a comprehensive programme of engagement on the United Kingdom's trade policy, including trade agreements, with the DAs and the administrations of the CDs and OTs, which supports its commitment to deliver trade agreements that will benefit every corner of our country.

International trade policy is a reserved matter, but modern trade agreements are broad in scope and may be viewed to intersect with areas of devolved competence. DIT shares information on trade agreements, and will continue to work with the various administrations to meet trade agreement implementation requirements in the relevant areas.

This includes working with officials in the various administrations to make sure appropriate communication on – and compliance with – our concluded trade agreements.

HM Government values scrutiny of the trade continuity programme and welcomes your Committee's report. I look forward to your future reports on our trade continuity agreements.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt**  
Minister for Investment  
Department for International Trade  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy