

# European Scrutiny Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From: Sir William Cash MP

23 April 2020

Rt Hon Conor Burns MP  
Minister for Trade Policy  
Department for International Trade  
3 Whitehall Place  
London SW1A 2AW

## **Enhancing trade in the Euro-Mediterranean region: changes to preferential rules of origin (Council document 13169/19 + ADD 1) (40897)**

Thank you for your [Explanatory Memorandum of 31 October 2019](#) on a [proposed Council Decision](#) setting out the position to be taken by the EU on proposed changes to the so-called "PEM Convention"—a framework agreement in which the EU and 25 non-EU countries in or near the Mediterranean region participate. We note that the changes agreed to by the Council were not, in any event, accepted by the PEM Joint Committee and will not take effect. We ask you to explain why the Joint Committee failed to agree the changes, whether there is any prospect of the same or a modified set of rule changes being brought back to the Joint Committee during 2020, and how many countries have indicated that they would be willing to agree updated rules of origin with the EU on a bilateral basis.

Now that the UK has left the EU, we ask you to tell us:

- how many non-EU parties to the PEM Convention have indicated that they intend to roll over the agreement and treat the UK as if it is still a Member State during the post-exit transition period;
- whether any non-EU parties to the PEM Convention have indicated that they do not intend to apply the agreement to the UK during the post-exit transition agreement;

- what assessment the Government has made of the likely costs and benefits of UK participation in the PEM Convention in its own right after leaving the EU, how long the process of joining is expected to take and whether it would be feasible to become a party during or immediately after a post-exit transition period;
- whether the UK would meet the criteria for acceding to the PEM Convention if a free trade agreement with the EU is not in place at the end of the post-exit transition period; and
- how soon you expect the Government to reach a decision on UK participation in the PEM Convention.

We also ask you to explain how bilateral relationships with third countries that do not participate in the PEM Convention might be relevant in deciding whether the UK should participate in its own right.

We look forward to receiving your response by 6 May 2020.

We are copying this letter to the Chair of the International Trade Committee and Joanna Welham, Clerk of the International Trade Committee; the Earl of Kinnoull, Chair of the EU Select Committee in the House of Lords and Christopher Johnson, Clerk of the Lords EU Select Committee; Edwina Osborne and Stephen Booth, your Departmental Scrutiny Coordinators; and Les Saunders and Donald Harris in the Cabinet Office.

**CHAIR**