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Angus MacNeil MP  
Chair of International Trade Committee

24 April 2020

Dear Mr MacNeil,

### **International Trade Committee Inquiry - Covid-19 pandemic and International Trade**

I hope this letter finds you well at this challenging and difficult time.

In May 2019, the Scottish Government published [Scotland, A Trading Nation](#), an ambitious plan to grow our exports from 20% to 25% of Scotland's GDP by 2029. The publication highlighted the importance of trade and the benefits that growing our exports could bring to the wider Scottish economy. It also set out a list of clear actions to deliver our ambitious target by 2029.

The Scottish Business Monitor showed that the number of firms seeing an increase in volume of business activity during Q1 2020 was at its lowest since Q1 2009. The forecast for the next 6 months is even starker with the outlook being the most negative since the survey began 22 years ago.

Further business intelligence suggests that companies are entirely focused on Covid now and have taken their eyes off Brexit. As they emerge from this crisis they will have less time to prepare for the end of the transition period on 31 December as well as fewer resources to equip them to do so. Given this stark evidence, it is imperative that the UK government pauses the current Brexit negotiations and urgently seeks an extension to the transition period. Continuing with their current timetable risks doing untold harm to Scottish businesses and the wider economy that has already been damaged by Covid-19.

The Scottish Government welcomes the fact that the International Trade Committee is holding an inquiry into the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on international trade. A Scottish Government Minister would indeed welcome the opportunity to offer views on how best we work with the Department for International Trade going forward to help our companies continue to trade across the world.

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I look forward to hearing from you directly.

Yours sincerely,



**IVAN MCKEE MSP**

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