



## Department for International Trade

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Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 24 November, enclosing an example of correspondence you have received from a number of your constituents, about parliamentary scrutiny of future UK trade agreements.

The Government is aware of Early Day Motion 128 and agrees that Parliament has a vital role to play in the scrutiny of trade agreements.

Let me deal with this in two parts: first, existing EU agreements whilst we are members of the EU. Second, our future arrangements once the UK is out of the EU.

The Government has clearly stated that until we leave the EU, the UK retains all the rights and obligations of EU membership. The right of both the Houses of Commons and Lords to scrutinise proposed EU legislation and agreements, including in trade matters, remains unchanged. As a result, the Department for International Trade (DIT) engages closely with Parliament on EU trade policy. This is achieved through the ongoing work of the House of Lords European Union Committee and the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee which scrutinise all EU matters.

Parliament has an important role to play in the scrutiny of EU trade agreements at the different stages of agreeing and implementing these agreements. The Government provides proactive updates on the progress of EU trade negotiations, as well as ensuring that the scrutiny process is followed appropriately ahead of signature and provisional application of agreements, and with other public documents relating to negotiations.

In the case of "mixed" agreements (those that cover areas falling under shared or Member State competence in addition to EU competence), Parliament also has an important part to play at the ratification stage. Under Section 20 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG), the Treaty is published as a Command Paper and laid before both Houses for 21 sitting days. According to the negative procedure MPs and Select Committees have the chance to scrutinise the treaty provisions, ask questions and potentially report. EU scrutiny also continues in respect of EU legislative amendment proposals and annual or specific reports.

Looking forward, the Government wants to build a truly Global Britain that is one of the firmest advocates for free trade anywhere in the world. Our departure from the EU offers us an opportunity to forge a new role for ourselves in the world; able to negotiate our own trade arrangements.


DIT has consulted widely, with a range of stakeholders, since the EU Referendum and will continue to do so. We are determined to secure the best possible trading opportunities for the UK. Any trade deal must be right for UK consumers, producers (including agriculture) and businesses. It must also uphold high levels of labour, health, animal welfare and environmental standards.

Your constituents will be interested to read the Government's White Paper 'Preparing for our future UK trade policy', which sets out the principles that will guide future UK trade policy as well as laying out the practical steps that will support those aims. The White Paper is published on the Gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-our-future-uk-trade-policy>.

As outlined in this Trade White Paper, the Government remains committed to a transparent, fair, and rules-based approach to international trade and we are inviting views on the UK's approach to its future trade policy, including future trade agreements. Parliament, the devolved administrations, the devolved legislatures, local government, business, trade unions, civil society, and the public from every part of the UK, will therefore have further opportunity to engage with and contribute to our trade policy.

After March 2019, the Government will ensure that Parliament has an appropriate role to play in the scrutiny of new UK trade treaties, as Parliament always has.

I hope this information will prove helpful and of some reassurance to your constituents.

*yours sincerely,*  


**THE RT HON LIAM FOX MP**  
Secretary of State, Department for International Trade  
& President of the Board of Trade