



Department for International Trade

Baroness Fairhead

Department for International Trade
King Charles Street
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AH

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000

E fairhead.correspondence@trade.gov.uk

W www.gov.uk

The Lord Stevenson of Balmacara
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

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Dear Lord Stevenson of Balmacara, 28th January 2019

Following the Committee Stage debate on the Trade Bill on 23 January I am writing to provide more clarity on the UK Government's intention to establish an inter-governmental Ministerial forum on future international trade agreements with the devolved administrations.

I would like to reiterate that the UK Government is committed to working closely with the devolved administrations to deliver a future trade policy that works for the whole of the UK. But it is important that we do this within the context of the current constitutional make-up of the UK, while acknowledging that international trade policy is a reserved matter.

As I said during the course of our debate, the operational arrangements for the frequency and terms of reference for this forum are subject to ongoing discussion with the devolved administrations. Our clear intention is that the Forum will be a flexible mechanism to enable Ministerial-level discussion at the key points during trade negotiations. There will also continue to be a programme of official-level technical engagement between my Department and the devolved administrations to underpin the Ministerial Forum and ensure that the devolved administrations can contribute to the development of the UK's international trade policy and negotiating positions.

My Department is working closely with the Cabinet Office on the Inter-Governmental Relations review to ensure that arrangements for future Free trade agreements sit appropriately within this. The questions raised in committee on determining legislative competence sit within this wider review, and it is my intention that the new ministerial forum focuses on international trade negotiations and associated issues of international trade policy.

I will provide further details on the proposals for the new inter-governmental forum in due course. I am placing a copy of this letter in the libraries of both Houses.

Baroness Fairhead

Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion

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