



Department for  
International Trade



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt  
Minister for Investment

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

The Lord Purvis of Tweed  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000  
E [grimstone.correspondence@trade.gov.uk](mailto:grimstone.correspondence@trade.gov.uk)  
W [www.gov.uk/dit](http://www.gov.uk/dit)

1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your contributions to the debate at the first sitting of Committee meeting on the Trade Bill on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September. As discussed, I am writing to provide a more detailed response to the questions you put forward regarding the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA).

Firstly, let me address your concerns around the opportunities offered by the UK under the GPA, as compared to those offered by the EU. Our overall approach to procurement trade policy is to keep the domestic market open, to enhance competition in public services and demonstrate the UK's commitment to free trade. Over the past seven years, this Government has introduced a raft of measures to help all businesses access and compete for public procurement opportunities and we intend to continue strengthening these after the transition period. We believe that this is a more constructive approach than reducing market access or introducing protectionist measures for UK businesses.

We are also committed to helping UK businesses take advantage of our international agreements and compete for overseas opportunities. That is why we have introduced an extensive programme of engagement between the Department for International Trade and businesses, as well as providing direct support to exporters through our network of 275 International Trade Advisors. You rightly point out that public procurement is a particularly complex sector for businesses to navigate, particularly in markets with less advanced procurement practices than the UK. We have a dedicated stakeholder group to understand more about the barriers that businesses face when bidding for overseas procurement opportunities. As an independent WTO member, we will share best practice from the UK with our trading partners to help overcome these barriers – the GPA provides an excellent forum for such co-operation.

You asked specifically why we have not sought to change the thresholds that we had under the EU. We are seeking to accede to the GPA on the basis of continuity of our existing market access offer to ensure a swift accession and continuity for UK businesses. The thresholds we are using are in line with those used across the majority of GPA parties thereby maintaining reciprocity. In any case, since many of the Central Government procurement opportunities covered by the GPA are relatively high value, changing our thresholds would have little impact in our overall market access offer. With regard to our negotiations with the EU, the UK's accession to the GPA as an independent member will provide UK and EU suppliers with access to respective procurement markets and, therefore, a chapter on public procurement in the FTA is not necessary.

Secondly, you asked me to clarify the references to procurement in the UK Internal Market (UKIM) White Paper. On that point, I can clarify that the procurement was not covered in the non-discrimination provisions of the Bill because the UK Government intends to deliver measures on procurement through a wider package of procurement reform that will be brought forward after the UKIM Bill. A procurement rules reform Green Paper will be published later this year and there will be a formal consultation. That will be the appropriate forum to discuss non-discrimination in the internal procurement market.

I hope this provides sufficient clarification and reassurance on your detailed contributions and look forward to furthering our discussions at Committee over the coming days.

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, Innovation & Industrial Strategy