



Department for International Trade

Sir James Duddridge KCMG MP
Minister for International Trade

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Derek Twigg MP, Rt Hon Mark Pritchard MP
House of Commons
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21st October 2022

Mr Chairman,

Department for International Trade engagement with the trade union movement

Further to Tuesday's sitting of the Trade (Australia and New Zealand) Public Bill Committee, I am writing to expand on the Department for International Trade's engagement with the trade union movement.

This Government has always had an open line to the Trades Union Congress and to trade unions on our trade agenda, and we welcome their input and engagement. Successive Secretaries of State have had regular contact with the Trades Union Congress Secretary-General, and the Department's Ministers have chaired meetings of a Trade Union Advisory Group specifically for discussion of trade policy and negotiations with the Trades Union Congress and its affiliates.

The Trades Union Congress has also held the designated trade union seat on the Department's Strategic Trade Advisory Group since its establishment in 2019. This Group provides a range of stakeholders across the UK with the opportunity to feed into our trade policy work and have their voices heard. The Strategic Trade Advisory Group is committed to a membership review every 24 months and recently received applications from the Trades Union Congress for the trade union seat. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the membership review in due course.

I correct the record in response to the points raised by the hon. Member for Sefton Central and the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown, regarding trade union membership of the Trade Advisory Groups. The Government agreed in August 2021 to include representatives from unions on six of the eleven Groups, namely:

- Automotive, Aerospace and Marine,
- British Manufactured and Consumer Goods,
- Telecoms and Technology,
- Chemicals,
- Creative Industries, and
- Financial Services.

Only in June 2022 did the Trades Union Congress agree to progress the onboarding of union representatives to four of the above trade advisory groups. A union representative from a union not affiliated with the Trades Union Congress has been suggested to join a fifth group. The Groups have since entered a period of membership review as mandated by their terms of reference. Once the review is concluded, the Department will invite unions to join a number of trade advisory groups when they reconstitute. The Trades Union Congress is being kept informed about this process.

Trade Advisory Groups are sector-specific, and membership is comprised of representatives from the relevant industry. For this reason, the Trade Union Congress is not a member of a particular trade advisory group, but has been an active participant in the Procurement, Implementation and Market Access, Sustainability, and Trade for Development thematic working groups.

The Department has not engaged in public commentary on trade union participation in our stakeholder groups other than to handle questions from the press on this matter.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Duddridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name and a flourish at the end.

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