



Department for Business & Trade

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12 December 2023

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for raising wider points of interest in the context of the Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill at Committee Stage on 7 December.

During the debate, you raised concerns regarding supply chains being tainted by modern slavery and forced labour.

The UK is a leading advocate for human rights around the world and it is right that we continue to uphold the importance of addressing modern slavery and forced labour through supply chains upon acceding to the CPTPP.

The Government has procedures in place to tackle this important issue. UK legislation already provides for robust measures to tackle humanitarian issues such as modern slavery in supply chains and CPTPP will not affect this. The Government Procurement Chapter of the CPTPP exempts measures necessary to protect public morals, human life or health. This includes financial penalties for organisations who fail to comply with the transparency obligations of the Modern Slavery Act.

Measures to mitigate the risks of forced labour in UK government supply chains were introduced in 2019. These set out how to identify and manage modern slavery risks in both existing contracts and new public procurement activity.

Through the Procurement Act 2023 we are, for the first time, making explicit provision to disregard bids from suppliers which are known to use forced labour or perpetuate modern slavery themselves or in their supply chain. Changes applied through this Act will strengthen existing provisions for authorities to exclude suppliers and disregard their bids where there is sufficient evidence of modern slavery by allowing for such exclusions whether or not there has been a conviction and irrespective of where such conduct takes place.

The Procurement Act also introduces a new mandatory ground to prevent suppliers convicted of refusing to pay the national minimum wage from bidding for public contracts. Additionally, wider changes to the rules will ensure that suppliers can't avoid exclusion by bidding in the name of a subsidiary, or by dissolving and reforming under a different name. All these rules apply to every supplier bidding for a contract, regardless of whether they are a British business or a foreign business, and UK membership of CPTPP will not change this. Regarding the points you raised concerning a specific case relating to NHS PPE, the DHSC takes claims of modern slavery very seriously. They acted quickly in relation to the allegations regarding Supermax and set out the measures taken in a public letter to the Anti

Modern Day Slavery Commissioner in April 2022. Investigations have now concluded and the products are available for use.

The government passed the Health and Care Act 2022 with a commitment to introduce regulations to eradicate the use of goods and services in the NHS that are tainted by slavery and human trafficking. These will help ensure the NHS, which is the biggest public procurer in the country, does not buy or use goods or services produced by or involving any kind of slave labour. This represents a significant step forward in the UK's mission to crack down on the evils of modern slavery wherever it is found.

I hope this letter reassures you on the importance that this Government places on the matters that you raised during Committee Stage of the Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Johnson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Johnson of Lainston CBE
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