



Department for
Business & Trade



HM Treasury

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13th November 2025

By email:

Dear Lord Fox,

Trade Act 2021 (Power to Implement International Trade Agreements) (Extension to Expiry) Regulations 2025

Thank you for your contributions on the Statutory Instrument debate on the extension of the Section 2 power within the Trade Act on 10 November.

During the debate you made an important contribution quoting the recent report on Treaty Scrutiny published by the International Agreements Committee on 11 September 2025. I value the work of this Committee, and the Government will be formally responding to this report in due course.

As mentioned in the debate, for new Free Trade Agreements, the Government has put in place an extensive set of non-statutory commitments to assist with parliamentary scrutiny and these are included as an Annex to this letter.

These additional scrutiny arrangements put in place by the Government were recognised by the International Agreements Committee in its report of 11 September – illustrating the additional scrutiny this has provided for Parliament:

*“The Government has itself acknowledged this in relation to free trade agreements where it has committed to sharing the treaty text before the treaty is formally laid for scrutiny under the CReG Act with the specific aim of allowing greater scrutiny.”
(Conclusions and Recommendations)*

“This set of commitments [referring to the Government non-statutory commitments] has allowed the IAC to conduct in-depth inquiries into the FTAs concluded with Australia and New Zealand and into the CPTPP. We have found that these commitments have in general worked well. We are grateful to the Chief Negotiators who have provided briefings. While the information they provide cannot be referred to as evidence, these briefings have been helpful in familiarising the Committee with

the main issues prior to the formal scrutiny process. Ultimately, as a result of the Government's agreement to modify the CReG Act scrutiny process for FTAs we have been able to produce more substantive reports on these FTAs than would otherwise have been possible under the CReG Act timetable. (paragraph 37)

In relation to CReG, the Government believes that this provides an effective and robust framework for scrutiny of treaties that require ratification, including free trade agreements. Under CReG, the Government must lay relevant treaties before Parliament for 21 sitting days before it can ratify them. Parliament has the power to prevent ratification and in the case of the House of Commons can do so indefinitely. The Government does not agree that a debate in Government time is the only way a motion under CReG can be debated by the Commons. There are a number of well-established procedures which are available for the Commons to secure a debate should it be the will of the House.

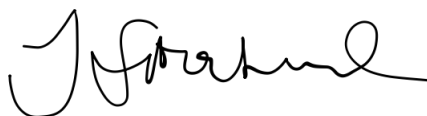
In addition, no trade agreement can, of itself, alter our domestic legislation. Any changes to UK legislation that are required for our trade agreements will need to be scrutinised and passed by Parliament in the usual way. In the case of the Australia and New Zealand FTAs, and the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, the passage of the necessary primary legislation to implement these agreements went through Parliamentary scrutiny processes which lasted 11 and 4.5 months respectively.

Consequently, when similar parliamentary democracies are compared to the United Kingdom, it is clear our practice is at least as strong as, other comparable systems such as those in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Finally, during the debate Lord Lansley raised a question regarding Turkey which you extended to any future UK/Republic of Korea (RoK) FTA. While I do not want to pre-empt what the content of any UK/RoK FTA may include – as the RoK had an trade agreement with the EU before the UK left the EU, I can confirm that the implementation of any UK/RoK FTA could be in the purview of section 2, and additional primary legislation would not be required to implement any FTA.

I hope this addresses your questions and, once again, thank you for your continued engagement on the Government's trade agenda. I am placing a copy of this letter in the libraries of both Houses.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Stockwood', written in a cursive style.

Lord Stockwood of Great Grimsby & Cleethorpes
Minister for Investment
Department for Business and Trade and His Majesty's Treasury

Annex: Non-Statutory Commitments – New Free Trade Agreements

Pre-Negotiations	• The Government will privately discuss prospective negotiations with the Business and Trade Select Committee (BTSC - Commons) and International Agreements Committee (IAC – Lords) before negotiations are launched. We expect this to take place during the public consultation period for new FTAs but will work further with the relevant Committee clerks on this. • For new FTA negotiations, the Government will undertake a public consultation or call for input. This further includes a commitment to publish its response to the consultation/call for input. Similarly, the Government will publish its negotiation objectives as well as a scoping assessment before the start of negotiations for new FTAs. • Should the BTSC or IAC publish a report on those objectives, the Government will gladly consider the report and, should it be requested, facilitate a debate on the objectives, subject to the parliamentary time available.
During Negotiations	• During new FTA negotiations the Government will publish regular updates – usually after each substantive negotiating round. Where there are no standard negotiating rounds, it will publish updates at regular intervals. • The Government is committed to undertaking close engagement with the relevant Select Committees, including providing oral and written evidence in public and private. The Chief Negotiator will usual provide private and public evidence to the Committees and offer to brief them, in private, after each negotiation round. In addition, the Government will make relevant Senior Level Civil Service experts available to brief the Committees on the technical detail of negotiations, where necessary, in private. • The Government will provide regular open briefings for all Members of Parliament and Peers on the progress of ongoing FTA negotiations at regular intervals. • The Government will continue to evaluate the quantity and quality of information shared with Parliament – and the Select Committees in particular – to ensure it supports robust scrutiny. • The Government will endeavour to inform the Select Committees of any Agreement in Principle publication dates in advance, where agreed with the negotiating partner. • The Government will always strive to share key FTA documents with the Select Committees, in confidence, at least 48 hours before publication, and certainly as early as possible – it may not always be possible to provide a fixed period of time before publication owing to the dynamic nature of negotiations where timelines are agreed with our international partners.

Post Signature	• In the case of new FTAs, the Government will publish the full treaty text of the FTA, alongside explanatory material and an independently scrutinised Impact Assessment which will cover the economic and environmental impacts of the agreement as soon as reasonably practicable following signature. • The Government will also endeavour to share the signed FTA, explanatory material, and an independently scrutinised Impact Assessment with the BTSC and IAC, in confidence, prior to publication, where time allows. • The Government will ensure that the relevant Select Committees have a reasonable amount of time to scrutinise new FTAs and produce any reports on them that they may wish to prior to the start of the CRaG period. • The Government expects there to be a period of at least 3 months between the publication of the signed FTA and the agreement being laid under Part 2 of the CRaG Act 2010. • The Government will, within 2 weeks of signature of an FTA, offer dates to meet with the BTSC and will not trigger the CRaG scrutiny process before those dates. • In addition, the Government will write to the Select Committees with an indicative timeline for the CRaG 21 day sitting period and other ratifying processes for a new FTA once it has been signed. (This will include indicative timeframes for publishing the advice of the Trade and Agriculture Commission and the Section 42 report as relevant, and for commencing CRaG.) The Government will work with the Select Committees to coordinate timelines as far as possible to facilitate scrutiny work. • Where appropriate, the Government will seek independent advice from the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC)). The Government's request for TAC advice, the TAC advice received, and the Government's own report will be laid before Parliament in line with Section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 (the TAC process). • The Government will work to ensure there will be at least 20 sitting days between publication of the Government's Section 42 report and commencement of the CRaG period to allow Select Committees to incorporate it into their reports. As such, the Government will endeavour to meet the specific request for 6 days between the Section 42 report being laid and the giving of Ministerial evidence wherever feasible. • Should the BTSC or IAC produce a report on a new FTA and as part of this request a debate, the Government will seek to facilitate a general debate on this, subject to available Parliamentary time. • The Government will work to ensure that a general debate on an FTA is held during the CRaG period where possible. Where a debate has been requested but cannot be accommodated during the CRaG scrutiny period, the Government will consider extending the CRaG period.
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	• The Government does not envisage a new FTA proceeding to ratification without a debate first having taken place on it, should one have been requested in a timely fashion by the BTSC or IAC, subject to available Parliamentary time.
Post Ratification and Implementation	• The Government will provide updates to the BTSC and IAC regarding the implementation, and continued operation, of signed FTAs on a regular basis. • The Government is committed to conducting ongoing monitoring and evaluation of future FTAs (from UK-Japan CEPA and Australia and New Zealand FTAs onwards). Monitoring reports will take place every two years from enter into force and evaluation reports every five years. • All amendments to an FTA must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Government's intention is that important treaty amendments should be subject to ratification and therefore will be submitted to Parliament for scrutiny in accordance with CRaG in the usual way. • The Government intends that all treaty amendments (whether subject to CRaG or not) will be laid in Parliament as a Command Paper and published in United Kingdom Treaty Series online. • All joint committee decisions made under an FTA (including joint committee decisions which constitute treaty amendments) will be published on the same webpage as the FTA on GOV.uk. This will ensure a complete, up-to-date, and easily accessible record of the FTA and relevant related documents.