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Dr Andrew Murrison
Chair
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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16 April 2018

Dear Dr Murrison

Thank you for your letter, dated 14 March, to the Prime Minister on the political situation in Northern Ireland and EU Exit. As the matters you raise relate directly to Northern Ireland, I am responding on behalf of the Government.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that our negotiating position as the UK leaves the EU protects and advances the unique interests of Northern Ireland. Our negotiating strategy puts our support for the Belfast Agreement at the heart of our approach to the Northern Ireland/Ireland dialogue. As the Prime Minister and others have said on numerous occasions, we will continue to abide by the UK's commitments in the Belfast Agreement.

UK Government Ministers have held several meetings with the leaders of Northern Ireland's political parties about Brexit. We remain committed to seeing the political situation in Northern Ireland resolved and devolved government restored.

In relation to the recent phase of talks, the Government facilitated and supported intensive negotiations among the main political parties, particularly the two largest parties, the Democratic Unionists and Sinn Fein, to see if there was a basis for re-establishing the Executive.

We also engaged with representatives of the SDLP, Alliance Party and Ulster Unionists as well as the Irish Government, in accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach. This phase of talks commenced on 24 January and concluded on 14 February. While substantive progress was made, the parties were unfortunately unable to finalise an agreement.

Following the conclusion of the talks, I have urged the parties to reflect on their positions. The position of the Government remains the same: devolved government is in the best interests of everyone in Northern Ireland and is best for the Union. We will continue to work towards this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RT HON KAREN BRADLEY MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND