Baroness Taylor of Bolton
Chair, Constitution Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

4 March 2019

Dear Ann,

Parliamentary Scrutiny of Treaties

Thank you for your letter of 29 November 2018 relating to the House of Lords Constitution Committee inquiry into parliamentary scrutiny of treaties. As you note, this is an important topic, especially in light of Brexit.

The JCHR has undertaken a short inquiry into human rights protections in international agreements. We hope to agree the report following that inquiry shortly and it will, I hope, be of interest to your Committee and complement your work.

The Committee has already discussed the broad approach, and our view in general terms is likely to be that the Government should do more to ensure that human rights considerations should be taken into account as and when international agreements are negotiated.

It is clear that, as other Committees have said, Parliament should be given more and better information about the agreements Government intends to negotiate, and their aims. From our point of view, such information should indicate any human rights issues that might be relevant to the negotiation as well as any human rights protections that might need to be sought. We would like human rights memoranda to be given to Parliament (and to JCHR) as a matter of course, with suitable levels of analysis.

The Committee is also likely to consider whether there is enough information given to Parliament on the implementation of international agreements containing human rights protections.
We look forward to colleagues' views, including those of the House of Lords Constitutional Committee, on how best to construct and resource a parliamentary process to sift all international agreements and highlight those which require further consideration to the appropriate Committee.

Yours sincerely

Harriet

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair