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for Exiting the
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Lord Boswell of Aynho
Chair, European Union Committee
House of Lords
London
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Dear Lord Boswell,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 February on international agreements, specifically on the technical note published on 8 February. I will respond to each question in turn.

On your first and third points about our engagement with third countries and their views on our proposed approach to international agreements, I can confirm that we have discussed the issue of international agreements, including free trade agreements, with many of our international partners.

These discussions have revealed a willingness to find a pragmatic means of addressing the issue of continuity of international agreements during the implementation period in a way that minimises disruption for everyone, and we have had strong support for continuity of our future trading relationships. In parallel, we have also been working with our international partners to agree how best to ensure continuity of the effect of our agreements beyond the implementation period.

On your second point about the prioritisation of effort and the significance placed on trade, the Government is working to secure continuity of existing EU international agreements as we leave the EU. These agreements cover a range of policy areas, and are important for various reasons: many of the agreements support the UK's development agenda (for example through Economic Partnership Agreements with developing countries) and political goals (by strengthening bilateral relationships with our international partners).

Regarding your fourth point about how this fits with the wider negotiations, at the March European Council we agreed with the EU that the UK is to be treated as a Member State for the purposes of international agreements during the the Implementation Period. The EU will send a notification to our partners setting this out. This is a positive and significant step, and will enable us to secure continuity in our relationships with third countries, including on trade and other key sectors for the duration of the implementation period.

Your fifth, sixth and seventh points seek more detail of the Government's proposed approach to international agreements, specifically the legal basis and the scope of this approach.

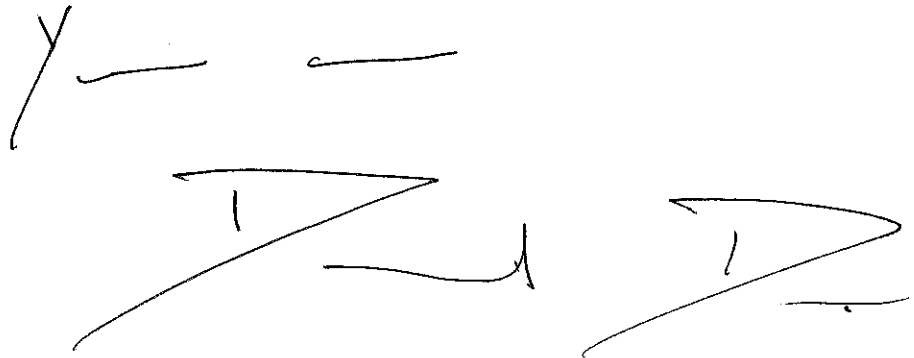
At the March European Council, the UK and EU agreed a shared aim to ensure continuity of our international agreements during the implementation period. The basis for this is the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties which provides for various factors that can be used to interpret existing international agreements.

On your final point about consultation with business, as set out in the Trade White Paper, *Preparing for our future UK trade policy*, the Government is committed to a transparent and inclusive trade policy. This is especially important for existing trading arrangements where business need to be assured that there will not be any disruption to existing preferential terms.

Business and other stakeholders were also invited to give a response to the Government's Trade White Paper, following its publication. There have been follow up meetings with some of the respondents, and the Department for International Trade is planning further meetings with those who took the time to give substantive responses to this issue.

In addition, my colleagues in the Department for International Trade have engaged widely with businesses, and other stakeholders, and will continue to do so as we work with trading partners. We have held regular 'town hall' style meetings to update business organisations and a series of regional roundtables in collaboration with the British Chambers of Commerce.

I trust this provides you with the additional clarity you are seeking and thank you for your interest in this important issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Davis', written over a horizontal line.

RT HON DAVID DAVIS MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION