



Cabinet Office

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Rt Hon Lord McFall of Alcluith
Senior Deputy Speaker
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

8 October 2018

Dear Lord McFall,

Following your request earlier this year that the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit be kept informed of intergovernmental activity, I am pleased to provide here an update on engagement and meetings that have taken place since our last exchange in July.

Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations)

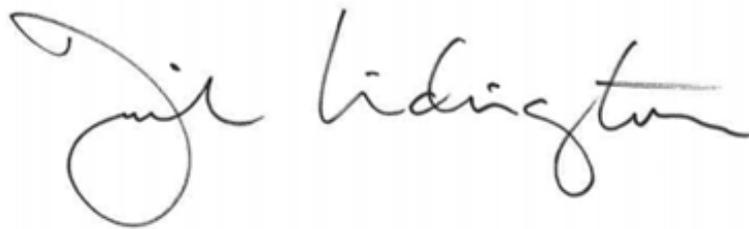
I chaired the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) (JMC(EN)) on Thursday 13 September, the twelfth such meeting of the Committee. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union provided an update on the progress of the EU Exit negotiations and the Committee discussed recent developments in Brussels. On domestic issues, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union provided an update on operational readiness and the Committee agreed to discuss this matter in more detail at its next meeting. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union also gave an update on the Withdrawal Agreement Bill and the Committee agreed to discuss the UK Government's approach in further detail at its next meeting. Finally, there was a discussion on the continued engagement between the UK Government and the devolved administrations on common frameworks. The Committee is due to meet monthly and will convene again in October.

Ministerial Forum (EU Negotiations)

The Ministerial Forum (EU Negotiations) (MF(EN)), co-chaired by Robin Walker MP and Chloe Smith MP, has now met four times since it was established in May 2018. This forum was established so that the devolved administrations have an increased opportunity to contribute to the development of UK negotiating lines in greater breadth and depth. Since our last correspondence, there have been two additional meetings of MF(EN). On 1 August the Ministers met in Cardiff to discuss the UK Government's position on Open and Fair Competition, as set out in the Government's Future Relationship White Paper published on 12 July. This followed an update on negotiations in Brussels. We were pleased that this meeting provided for a substantive discussion on a key policy area relating to our future relationship. It was agreed that further detailed discussions at official level on specific aspects of Open and Fair Competition would need to take place in due course.

On 17 September Minister George Eustice MP, from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs led a discussion at the Ministerial Forum on EU Negotiations on agri-food trade and fisheries. This meeting was also attended by Heather Hancock, Chair of the Food Standards Agency and Ross Finney, Chair of Food Standards Scotland, in addition to Ministers from the devolved administrations and senior officials from the Northern Ireland Civil Service. From the Scottish Government, the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans, Graeme Dey MSP and Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, MSP was in attendance. From the Welsh Government: Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Rebecca Evans AM and Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM were present. We were again pleased to hold a substantive policy discussion of the UK Government's position and respective views from each administration.

Underpinning this ministerial engagement, there is ongoing official-level engagement to discuss a range of issues including the progress of negotiations in Brussels, the Withdrawal Agreement Bill and the policy detail behind topics relating to the future relationship with the EU. These discussions also highlight policy areas and issues to be covered at future MF(EN) meetings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail.

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP