

# Committee on Exiting the European Union

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon David Davis MP  
Secretary of State for Exiting the EU  
9 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AG

Dear David

21 February 2018

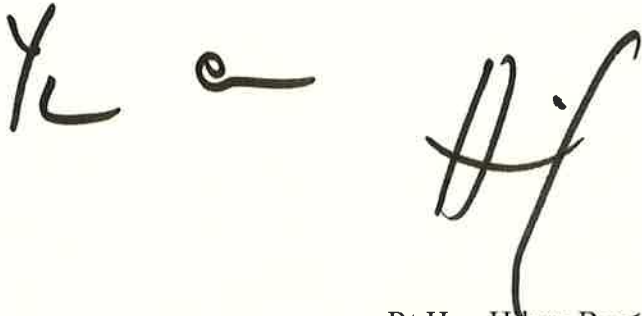
Following the Committee's visit to Brussels on 19 February, I am writing to you to convey the Committee's view that the UK is now at a critical point in the negotiation process. A great deal of attention has been given to the October deadline for the end of negotiations, but it is now clear that events in the next few weeks will have a crucial influence on the shape, and therefore the outcome, of the negotiations that will follow, in particular the publication of the draft legal text on the Phase 1 agreement, the European Parliament's resolution on the future relationship and the adoption by the European Council of its guidelines for the negotiations on the future relationship.

In these circumstances, clarity about both the transitional / implementation period and the UK's proposals for that future partnership is urgently needed. On the transitional / implementation period, in our Second Report of this session on *The progress of the UK's negotiations on EU withdrawal*, published on 1 December, we urged the Government to publish a White Paper as soon as possible after the December European Council. I am concerned that this has not yet happened and, given that there appear to be some differences of interpretation between the Government and the EU on how the transitional / implementation period will work in practice, UK businesses need certainty as soon as possible if this period is to serve its purpose.

On the future relationship, we welcome the proposals set out by the Prime Minister in her Munich speech on future co-operation on security, defence, foreign policy and counter-terrorism. However, while your own speech in Vienna was helpful, we have yet to see similar detail on our future economic relationship, including on trade in goods and access to services. In our report on *The progress of the UK's negotiations on EU withdrawal* we called on the Government to provide more specific proposals to Parliament on what a deep and special partnership would mean in practice.

It is now 19 months since the EU referendum and just over one month until the European Council is due to consider its negotiating mandate on the future relationship. I hope you will recognise, therefore, the urgent need now to provide more detail on the Government's plans so that Parliament, UK businesses and the EU27 can all see exactly what kind of future relationship the UK will be seeking. If this does not happen, then there is a risk that either the start of negotiations on the future relationship will be delayed, or that the EU's negotiating guidelines may close off options.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP  
Chair