



European Scrutiny Committee

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From: Sir William Cash MP

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Rt Hon David Davis MP
Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union
House of Commons

I am writing in the wake of the Prime Minister's speech setting out the U.K.'s negotiating objectives for exiting the European Union. Many Members of the House had expected more details of the negotiating objectives to be given, and to be set out in a Command Paper.

I note the Prime Minister's concern that giving too much information could undermine the Government's negotiations and I accept that a "running commentary" would not be appropriate.

The Government has already promised that the United Kingdom Parliament will not have access to less information than does the European Parliament. It remains to be seen what information is given to the EP, and on what terms, and we will return to that pledge in due course. I and colleagues on other Committees have tasked the National Parliament Office with monitoring the situation and reporting back to us.

At this stage, I am writing to set out clearly that although select committees do not wish to undermine negotiations, the Government remains accountable to Parliament, and Committees expect to be provided with information on the Government's desired outcomes, and factual analyses of the position on, for example, possible legal arrangements. Negotiations cannot begin without each party setting out its starting position, and any factual analysis will be available to negotiating partners as well as to the UK.

Committees share a common interest in this; the process of exiting the European Union will affect every department in the UK government, and all departmental select committees will monitor it closely. Committees need the information to enable them to give an informed response both to Government proposals and to colleagues. The European Scrutiny Committee is tasked with looking at all European legislative proposals, and it may ask fellow

committees for their opinion, as we are entitled under our Standing Orders, on matters within their subject area. I note the Committee for Exiting the EU has also said it wishes to consult other committees, when appropriate.

I have no doubt that Committees will continue to raise questions with the Government. I expect full and clear replies. If the Government judges that giving particular information requested would prejudice the negotiating process, it should explain the difficulties in sufficient detail for us to be able to understand them. The process of exiting the UK should reaffirm the sovereignty of Parliament, not bypass it.

Amos
Bill

CHAIRMAN

Cc Rt Hon David Lidington, Leader of the House of Commons
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