



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Elizabeth Truss MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary
of State for Justice

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights
Committee Office
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

12 October 2016

Dear Harriet,

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION

Thank you for your letter of 13 September inviting me to attend an oral evidence session with the Joint Committee on Human Rights. The Government welcomes this opportunity to set out its commitment to human rights, as evidenced by its response to judgments, and to hear the Committee's views. I have asked Sir Oliver Heald QC to attend on my behalf as the Minister for Human Rights. My officials will contact the Committee Clerks to agree a mutually convenient date for the session.

We are grateful for the Committee's careful consideration of human rights judgments which went into its Seventh Report of 2014–15. The Government intends to publish its response shortly to enable this to form a basis for discussion in the oral evidence session.

We are still developing our proposals for a Bill of Rights, so it would be premature to discuss them now, but we shall set out our proposals in due course and I would be glad to discuss them with you at that point.

In the same vein, I have also taken note of the Committee's inquiry into "What are the human rights implications of Brexit?". As the Prime Minister has made clear, we are going to make the most of the opportunities that our departure from the European Union (EU) presents: getting out into the world and doing business right across the globe, while at home building a Britain that works for everyone. As we conduct our negotiations, it must be a priority to regain more control of the numbers of people who come here from Europe, but also to allow British companies to trade with the single market in goods and services.

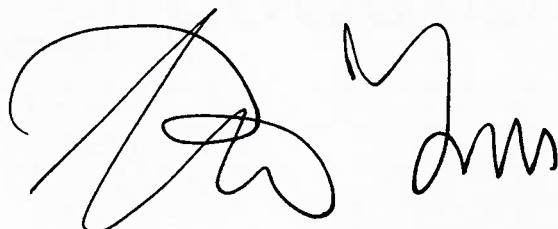
Likewise, we recognise the need for a smooth transition which minimises disruption to our trading relationships, including with developing countries. There will be no immediate changes to our relationship with the EU: until we have left, the United Kingdom will remain a member with all of the rights and obligations that membership entails. But leaving the EU now offers the United Kingdom an opportunity to forge a new role for itself in the world: to negotiate its own trade agreements, and to be a positive and powerful force for free trade.

At every step of these negotiations, we shall work to ensure the best possible outcomes for the British people. This includes United Kingdom nationals living in EU countries.

The Prime Minister has also been clear that she wants to protect the status of EU nationals already living in the United Kingdom, and the only circumstances in which that would not be possible would be if the rights of British citizens in EU Member States were not protected in return.

The Government is about to begin these negotiations, in advance of which it would be wrong to set out further unilateral positions. The Prime Minister has made clear that the Government will not provide a running commentary on its plans. You will understand, therefore, that there is only a limited amount that Sir Oliver will be able to discuss on this subject, but we look forward to seeing the outcome of the Committee's consideration of the questions that it has identified for its inquiry.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Elizabeth Truss', written in a cursive style.

ELIZABETH TRUSS MP