



Ministry
of Justice

Edward Argar MP
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State for
Justice

Lord Boswell – Chair
European Union Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

¹²
4 January 2019

Dear Tim,

POLITICAL DECLARATION REFERENCES TO THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Thank you for your letter of 19 December 2018 to the Secretary of State for Justice regarding your concerns about the references to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in the Political Declaration made by the European Union and the United Kingdom. I am responding on his behalf.

The UK has a longstanding tradition of ensuring our rights and liberties are protected domestically and of fulfilling our international human rights obligations. The decision to leave the European Union does not change this. The White Paper and the Political Declaration make clear that our future relationship with the EU should be underpinned by our shared values of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and this includes our continued commitment to the ECHR.

You note particularly the difference in wording between the outline Political Declaration (14 November) and the final Political Declaration (22 November). This difference in wording does not represent a change in the UK's position on the ECHR. The UK is a founding member of the Council of Europe and one of the first countries to ratify the Convention, which I can assure you and your committee the UK has no plans to withdraw from. Both the White Paper and the Political Declaration make clear that a central tenet of our future relationship with the EU is our mutual belief in the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In relation to your question about plans for reform of our human rights framework, our manifesto committed to not repealing or replacing the Human Rights Act while the process of EU exit is underway. It is right that we wait until the process of leaving the EU concludes before considering the matter further in the full knowledge of the new constitutional landscape.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD ARGAR MP