



Lord Boswell of Aynho
Chairman, European Union Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

25 January 2019

Dear Lord Boswell,

UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

I am writing to you following an urgent question yesterday in the House of Commons on the issue of EU Free Trade Agreements to which my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Trade Policy, responded, given his Department's responsibilities in this area.

As you will be aware, we have been working with third countries to identify which of the EU's existing international agreements are relevant, important and need action as a result of our exit from the EU. Not all of these agreements need action. This is for various reasons; some of these agreements have been superseded because they have been amended over time as the terms have changed or new countries have joined the EU; some are not applicable to the UK, and in some instances, we signed the agreement as a member in our own right and so our membership will therefore continue. As a consequence, the number of replacement treaties is much lower than the full list on the EU Treaties database.

We have agreed with the EU that they will notify treaty partners that the UK is treated as a Member State for the purpose of these existing EU agreements during the implementation period. This provides a basis for continuity in international agreements during the implementation period across the board.

However, the Government continues its work on no deal as an operational priority. I am writing to update you on the preparatory work with third countries to deliver continuity of the effects, where possible, of our existing EU international agreements in a no deal scenario. In particular, I wanted to update the Committee on those agreements which are already signed or close to signature and which we expect will soon be laid for Parliamentary scrutiny under the usual procedures set out in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

Over recent weeks, five nuclear cooperation agreements have completed the CRaG scrutiny process (with the US, Canada, Australia and two with the International Atomic Energy Agency), as has the Interbus agreement and two judicial cooperation agreements (Hague 2005 Convention on the Choice of Court Agreements and Hague 2007 Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance). Other agreements currently before Parliament include the Common Transit Convention and the Convention on Simplification of Formalities in Trade in Goods.

I have enclosed a list of bilateral agreements showing those agreements which we have already signed, and those agreements which we expect to sign in the near future. Also attached is a list of multilateral agreements showing those agreements where we are taking action to become an independent party. It outlines those agreements where we have taken steps to lodge formal applications or accede, or expect to take such steps in the near future. These bilateral and multilateral agreements cover a range of sectors, including agri-food and agriculture agreements, mutual recognition agreements, trade and transport agreements.

As you will appreciate, there are other agreements where the UK is seeking to ensure readiness by the end of March 2019 in the event of a 'no deal' scenario. The attached lists only include signed agreements or those we expect to sign very shortly. We will provide a further update on these other agreements after technical discussions have concluded.

In the interests of transparency, a copy of this letter and the accompanying lists will be deposited in the library of both Houses. I am writing in similar terms to the Chairs of the Constitution Committee and the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee as well as the Chairs of the Exiting the EU Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, the European Scrutiny Committee and the Procedure Committee in the House of Commons.

I trust this will be a welcome update. I would be happy to discuss any questions you or colleagues may have on this programme of work, including Parliamentary ratification, should they arise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Barclay', with a stylized flourish at the end.

RT HON STEVE BARCLAY MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION