

9th August 2018

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the Trade Bill and parliamentary scrutiny.

I absolutely understand the need for parliamentary scrutiny of trade agreements as we leave the European Union, which is why I welcome the Government's continued commitment to a transparent and inclusive trade policy.

Let me reassure you that the Trade Bill only legislates to implement trade agreements that the UK is already signed up to through our membership of the EU. In order to provide continuity in our country's existing trade relationships, for both businesses and citizens, these agreements will be transitioned into UK law. These transitioned agreements will be based, as closely as possible, on the corresponding trade agreement that each partner country has with the EU.

The Trade Bill only allows the UK to make regulations to implement obligations in any international trade agreements which our country already has with partner countries, provided that these countries have signed a corresponding agreement with the EU before our withdrawal. The powers in the Trade Bill cannot be used to implement new trade agreements with new partners that do not exist before exit day.

Jonathan Djanogly's amendments 8 and New Clause 6 aimed to increase parliamentary scrutiny of the process of transitioning existing agreements. Given that the Government will be replicating existing EU free trade agreements on the closest possible terms, this amendment is redundant. These existing agreements have already been through the relevant scrutiny processes in Parliament when they were implemented by the EU, including passing through both Houses' scrutiny committees.

However, I welcome that the Government has been listening to concerns and tabled its own amendments to the Trade Bill to increase parliamentary scrutiny for these transitioned agreements. These place a duty on the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament a report detailing the changes made to each of the transitioned agreements and highlighting what it is that has changed. In addition, each of these regulations will be subject to the affirmative resolution process to ensure greater transparency and scrutiny for Parliament.

On the wider issue of parliamentary scrutiny of trade agreements, the Government has made absolutely clear that Parliament will have a vital role to play in our future trade policy. The Secretary of State for International Trade made a Statement to the House on future scrutiny of trade agreements on Monday 16th July 2018.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

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