

28th February 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about future trade agreements.

I understand your concerns regarding standards in future trade agreements, the scrutiny of such agreements, and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms.

Maintaining safety and public confidence in the food we eat is of the highest priority. Without exception, imports must meet all the relevant UK product rules and regulations. Any future trade agreements must work for UK farmers, businesses, and consumers, and uphold food safety, animal welfare standards, and environmental protection. In addition, when it comes to products imported to the UK – quality, safety and performance will continue to be paramount.

The Government is committed to transparency and scrutiny of its trade agreements. The Government has committed to Parliament scrutinising our future trade arrangements. Parliament will be able to inform negotiations, be regularly updated, and will ultimately play its role in the ratification of any new Free Trade Agreement through the process set out in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. Moreover, the Government also had the largest ever response to the public consultation on future free trade agreements and recently held a debate in Parliament on these. I am confident these measures will ensure that both the public and parliamentarians get the chance to have their say on future trade agreements.

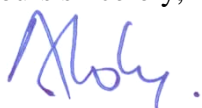
Finally, with regard to ISDS mechanisms, this is a complicated subject and I can understand why there is some confusion surrounding them. The right of governments to regulate in the public interest is protected in investment chapters in free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. The UK has more than 90 bilateral investment treaties in place with other countries and there has never been a successful ISDS claim brought against the UK, nor has the threat of potential claims affected the Government's legislative programme.

I would like to reassure you that ISDS does not, and cannot, force the privatisation of public services. In addition, the UK supports transparency in ISDS. The new United Nations Rules on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration, to which the UK is a signatory, are specifically designed to address such concerns.

On the specific issue of public healthcare, the Government is committed to protecting the NHS. The NHS is safeguarded by specific exemptions in all EU trade agreements and, as our country leaves the EU, the UK will continue to ensure that rigorous protections for the NHS are included in all trade agreements it is party to.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

Follow Alok on Twitter: @AlokSharma_RDG

**Please reply to: Alok Sharma MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
e: alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk w: www.aloksharma.co.uk t: 0118 941 3803**