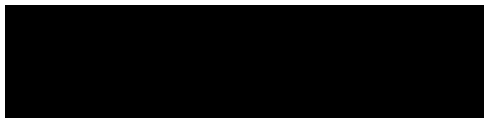


Stormont Castle
BELFAST
BT4 3TT



**Marie Austin
Committee for TEO
Room 412
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SR**

21 September 2020

Dear Marie

**JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE (EUROPEAN NEGOTIATIONS) MEETING –
THURSDAY 16 JULY 2020**

I wrote to you on the 16th July to advise you that the twenty fourth meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations (JMC (EN)) would be held on the 16th July at 4:40pm and to provide you with a copy of the agreed agenda. I am now writing to report on the Executive's actions at that meeting and provide you with a copy of the agreed Joint Communiqué.

The Executive was represented at the meeting by the First Minister, deputy First Minister, Junior Minister Lyons and Junior Minister Kearney. The other Ministers that attended the meeting were:

From the UK Government: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP; The Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon Alister Jack MP; The Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Simon Hart MP; The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP; The Paymaster General, Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP; The Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP and Sherpa, Prime Minister's Europe Adviser and Chief Negotiator of Task Force Europe, David Frost.

From the Welsh Government: The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles MS.

From the Scottish Government: The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations, Michael Russell, MSP and the Minister for Europe and International Development, Jenny Gilruth, MSP.

On the agenda item on the negotiations with the EU the First Minister welcomed the increased level of engagement between officials and the information provided from the Task Force Europe team following each negotiating round. She also stated there needed to be an improvement in Ministerial engagement, not just on the negotiations but in other areas such as operational readiness and in particular legislation requirements.

The deputy First Minister recognised the increased ambition for a deal but expressed concern about the timeframe for agreement and the urgent need for clarity for businesses to enable them to prepare adequately for the end of the transition period.

On the discussion on the Intergovernmental Relations review the First Minister welcomed the progress since the last meeting of JMC(EN) in May and that the next steps should be consideration of the issues at a JMC(Plenary). These comments were endorsed by the deputy First Minister.

On operational readiness (including the Protocol) the First Minister requested urgent clarity on the outstanding areas of implementation of the Protocol and in particular the commitment for legislation for unfettered access for NI-GB trade. She expressed concern about the additional impact of Covid and the need for constant sharing of information and contact with the Executive to enable businesses to prepare.

The deputy First Minister expressed concern that operational readiness was not where it needed to be particularly on the controls and checks for SPS and the clarity needed overall for businesses. She also still had concerns, which had been expressed previously, on how the interdependencies between the requirements for the implementation of the Protocol and the negotiations on the future relationship were being considered.

The Internal Market discussion was focussed on the publication of the White Paper prior to the JMC(EN) meeting on Thursday. The First Minister stated that it was important that we have friction free trade in both directions and the commitment for unfettered access legislative underpinning. She welcomed the repatriation of powers however on the internal market she noted the technicalities of following EU rules as required by the Protocol and requested clarity on the role of the Assembly under the proposals.

The deputy First Minister stated the Executive's priority to ensure unfettered access and that the Executive has yet to take a position on the Internal Market proposals however she was concerned about the extent of the references within the document to the requirements of the Protocol.

The Joint Communiqué which was agreed at the meeting is attached at **Appendix A**.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE (EU NEGOTIATIONS) COMMUNIQUE

16 JULY 2020

The twenty-fourth Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) met today via video conference. The meeting was chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The attending Ministers were:

From the UK Government: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP; The Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon Alister Jack MP; The Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Simon Hart MP; The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP; The Paymaster General, Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP; The Minister for the Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith MP and Sherpa, Prime Minister's Europe Adviser and Chief Negotiator of Task Force Europe, David Frost.

From the Scottish Government: The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs, Michael Russell MSP and The Minister for Europe and International Development, Jenny Gilruth MSP.

From the Welsh Government: The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles MS.

From the Northern Ireland Executive: First Minister, Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA, deputy First Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA, Junior Minister Gordon Lyons MLA and Junior Minister Declan Kearney MLA.

The Committee discussed negotiations with the EU, the Intergovernmental Relations Review, the Northern Ireland Protocol, preparedness for the end of the transition period, the launch of a communications campaign for readiness, legislation, and the UK Internal Market.