

News story: Baroness Anelay's speech at the UK Accreditation Service Annual Lunch

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for what has been a wonderful lunch. I would also like to pay tribute to Lord Lindsay who is a committed and effective advocate for UKAS.

Accreditation is vital for facilitating the trade in goods, and giving consumers confidence in the quality and safety of products. The role of accreditation will be crucial to the future success of the UK, just as it is to supporting the economy now.

I know that officials in my department have been working closely with UKAS and your partners. We value your expertise and feedback on priorities as the UK leaves the EU, including access to EU markets, future domestic regulation and continued participation in international standards and accreditation bodies.

I am aware of the importance of clarity on our future relationship with the EU for you, and would now like to outline the progress that has been made since we started the negotiations.

Approach to negotiations

We are confident that both sides want to achieve the best possible outcome and the strongest partnership for the future – one that works for the UK and the EU.

We have concluded four rounds of talks. They were conducted in a constructive and determined manner resulting in decisive steps forward. We now hope to see flexibility from the Commission in round five, which is taking place this week.

The Prime Minister's speech in Florence last month set out the scale of our ambitions for our future relationship, as well as our proposal for a simple, clear, time-limited period of implementation.

Since that speech and the triggering of Article 50 in March, the UK has published 14 papers to address the current issues in the talks and set out the building blocks of the relationship we would like to see with the EU, both as we leave, and into the future.

These papers offer pragmatic and innovative solutions to issues related to our withdrawal and the future deep and special partnership that we want with the EU. They do not aim to dictate a single approach, but, rather, considered options.

Yesterday, we took a significant step in preparing to leave the EU by

publishing Trade and Customs White Papers, which both pave the way for legislation that will ensure the UK is ready on the first day after exit. The trade paper also establishes the principles, which will guide future UK's trade policy as well as the practical steps that will support these aims.

The Government will publish further position papers on other issues in due course, providing more information to business and individuals, and informing our negotiations with the EU.

Future economic partnership

We recognise that we cannot leave the EU and have everything stay the same – the single market is built on a balance of rights and obligations.

In building a future economic partnership with the EU, the Government seeks an entirely new agreement with the European Union. This will not mean membership of the European Economic Area, nor replicating the recent free trade agreement with Canada.

But it will facilitate the most free and frictionless trade possible between the UK and the EU, whilst allowing us to forge new trade relationships with our partners in Europe and around the world.

This new relationship with the EU, should be built from our unique starting point – of our rules and regulations being the same, and our commitment to free trade and high standards.

I recognise that our future customs arrangements will be of importance to many of you here. The summer customs publication sets out two options for the future relationship with the EU.

The first, a highly streamlined arrangement, would reduce customs administration to a minimum. The second, a new customs partnership, would potentially maintain the status quo arrangement by ensuring that EU duties are paid when goods are imported via the UK.

To deliver either of these solutions, innovations in data sharing, mutual assistance, simplified procedures and information technology solutions have been put forward, and work has been carried out to engage with a range of stakeholders in these areas.

Regardless of the outcome of these negotiations, the UK would need new customs legislation in place by 2019. Responding to calls from businesses for continuity, yesterday's Customs White Paper confirms that the UK's new legislation will, as far as possible, replicate the effect of existing EU customs laws.

Goods

We are also seeking to find the best way for the benefits of our common goods regulatory frameworks to continue enabling free and frictionless trade.

Ultimately we want this to form part of our future economic partnership, but

we also recognise that investors, business and consumers want to be able to plan ahead with certainty.

The matter of goods placed on the market prior to the withdrawal date has been a key topic of the opening phase of negotiations. I know this will be of interest to many of you here, and hope that you can support us in seeking this pragmatic solution.

Our recent position paper on this subject set out the UK's principles for ensuring goods continue to be available on UK and EU markets, and that business do not have to duplicate compliance activity – such as conformity assessment – undertaken prior to the UK leaving the EU.

Regulatory relationship and dispute resolution

Maintaining the high standards of our products and services was highlighted as a key priority in the August publication on customs. The Prime Minister emphasised in her Florence Speech last month that we do not only want to protect these requirements but to strengthen them.

Your contribution on this matter is highly valued, as we look to safeguard the quality of regulations and assessment processes while negotiating a deal and considering the UK's future regulatory environment.

We will also continue to drive forward the development of standards and frameworks at a global level.

I am confident that your work carried out through international bodies, such as the European Cooperation for Accreditation, the International Accreditation Forum, as well as through the international standards organisations will be crucial in supporting commercial and technical activities of firms around the world.

We have recognised that a new trade deal will need to be reinforced by dispute resolution mechanisms. This could take inspiration from international treaties such as the Schengen Agreement, the EU Singapore Free Trade Agreement and the EU Moldova Association Agreement.

In terms of civil judicial cooperation, the Government has highlighted cross-border resolution frameworks between consumers and suppliers that make sure there is a clear legal process where standards are not upheld, underpinning commitment to regulations.

Again, existing measures have been explored and we would like to translate some of these directly into domestic law.

The Prime Minister confirmed in her speech in Florence that we are confident that new legal resolution systems can be agreed.

Interim arrangements

The implementation period that the Government intends to negotiate will ensure that companies and assessors have time to adapt to the new

relationship. We have made a realistic commitment in advancing this proposal, by defining the limitations that we would reasonably expect on our rights to negotiate trade deals with the rest of the world over this time.

The implementation period will also maintain the existing regulations and customs exemptions, ensuring a smooth transition for businesses.

During the implementation period, people will continue to be able to come and live and work in the UK. There will be a registration system – an essential preparation for the new immigration system required to re-take control of our borders.

The implementation period would be time limited, with its length determined simply by how long it will take to prepare and implement the new systems we need.

Repeal Bill

In terms of bringing forward changes into domestic legislation, the Repeal Bill, formally known as the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, passed Second Reading last month.

This will maximise certainty for individuals and businesses as we leave the EU. The laws and rules that we have now will, so far as possible, continue to apply, providing assurance on legal rights and obligations.

The powers in the Bill will ensure that, whatever the outcome of the negotiations, the statute book can continue to function.

Conclusion

We have made significant progress in setting out our position and the options available for a successful future relationship with our European partners.

The Summer papers have also opened a forum for debate with businesses and wider stakeholders on specific issues. We want a comprehensive deal that takes into account the range of implications from leaving the European Union, and highly value specialist knowledge and analysis.

Together we can work to quickly and effectively resolve areas of disagreement with our European partners, and look to seize the opportunities to forge a new role for ourselves in the world that are offered by our new relationship and ambition for a shared future.

I want to thank you again for your contributions to our work. My colleagues across government, including my department, will welcome further dialogue with you on these important issues, as we progress through the negotiations and forge a new deep and special relationship with the European Union.

Thank you.

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