

[Ghana-UK Joint Ministerial Statement on a Continuity Trade Agreement](#)



The Hon. Alan Kyerematen, Ghana's Minister of Trade & Industry and the Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, UK Secretary of State for International Trade met via video conference.

Today we are pleased to announce that we have reached a consensus on the main elements of a new trade agreement. This provides the basis to replicate, the effects of the existing trade relationship between the UK and Ghana – a relationship which is underpinned by our strong people to people connections and has driven economic growth, created jobs, and inspired creativity and innovation in both our countries.

The intention is for the Agreement to provide duty free and quota free access for Ghana and the same preferential tariff reductions for British exporters as provided by the arrangement that is currently in force. We intend over the next few weeks to finalise the text of the Agreement to reflect progress made in relation to rules of origin, cumulation arrangements, time bound commitments, provisions for development cooperation and commitments to human rights and good governance.

We re-affirm our shared ambition to further strengthen our partnership in the future and to work with the West African partners to make progress towards a regional agreement.

Published 31 December 2020

[Letter from Michelle Donelan to higher education students](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]An open letter from Michelle Donelan

MP, Minister of State for Universities, to higher education students about returning to their studies in spring 2021.

Prime Minister's New Year's message: 31 December 2020

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Well folks we are coming to the end of 2020.

The year in which the Government was forced to tell people how to live their lives, how long to wash their hands, how many households could meet together.

And a year in which we lost too many loved ones before their time.

So I can imagine that there will be plenty of people who will be only too happy to say goodbye to the grimness of 2020.

But just before we do, I want to remind you that this was also the year when we rediscovered a spirit of togetherness, of community.

It was a year in which we banged saucepans to celebrate the courage and self-sacrifice of our NHS staff and care home workers

A year in which working people pulled the stops out to keep the country moving in the biggest crisis we have faced for generations – shopworkers, transport staff, pharmacists, emergency services, everyone, you name it.

We saw a renewed spirit of volunteering, as people delivered food to the elderly and vulnerable.

And time after time as it became necessary to fight new waves of the virus, we saw people unite in their determination, our determination, to protect the NHS and to save lives.

Putting their lives, your lives, on hold.

Buying precious time for medicine to provide the answers, and it has.

In 2020 we have seen British scientists not only produce the world's first effective treatment of the disease, but just in the last few days a beacon of hope has been lit in the laboratories of Oxford.

A new room temperature vaccine that can be produced cheaply and at scale,

and that offers literally a new lease of life to people in this country and around the world.

And with every jab that goes into the arm of every elderly or vulnerable person, we are changing the odds, in favour of humanity and against Covid.

And we know that we have a hard struggle still ahead of us for weeks and months, because we face a new variant of the disease that requires a new vigilance.

But as the sun rises tomorrow on 2021 we have the certainty of those vaccines.

Pioneered in a UK that is also free to do things differently, and if necessary better, than our friends in the EU.

Free to do trade deals around the world.

And free to turbocharge our ambition to be a science superpower.

From biosciences to artificial intelligence,

and with our world-leading battery and wind technology we will work with partners around the world,

not just to tackle climate change but to create the millions of high skilled jobs this country will need not just this year – 2021 – as we bounce back from Covid, but in the years to come.

This is an amazing moment for this country.

We have our freedom in our hands and it is up to us to make the most of it.

And I think it will be the overwhelming instinct of the people of this country to come together as one United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland working together to express our values around the world.

Leading both the G7 and the COP 26 climate change summit in Glasgow,

And an open, generous, outward looking, internationalist and free trading global Britain, that campaigns for 12 years of quality education for every girl in the world.

2021 is the year we can do it,

and I believe 2021 is above all, the year when we will eventually do those everyday things that now seem lost in the past.

Bathed in a rosy glow of nostalgia, going to the pub, concerts, theatres, restaurants, or simply holding hands with our loved ones in the normal way.

We are still a way off from that, there are tough weeks and months ahead.

But we can see that illuminated sign that marks the end of the journey, and even more important, we can see with growing clarity how we are going to get there.

And that is what gives me such confidence about 2021.

Happy New Year!

[Withdrawal Agreement Specialised Committee meeting on UK Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus: Joint UK-EU statement](#)

Press release

The third Committee meeting, on 30 December by video conference co-chaired by European Commission and UK government officials, discussed Sovereign Base Areas.



Joint UK-EU statement following the third meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Specialised Committee on issues related to the implementation of the Protocol on the Sovereign Base Areas of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Cyprus:

The third meeting of the Specialised Committee on the Protocol on Sovereign Base Areas was held yesterday, 30 December via video conference, co-chaired by officials from the European Commission and the UK Government. The Committee was established by the Withdrawal Agreement to facilitate the implementation and application of the Protocol.

The UK and the EU discussed the remaining issues relating to the implementation of the Protocol, which shall enter into effect at the end of the Transition Period, and reaffirmed their continued commitment to its smooth implementation.

The co-chairs noted the progress made and agreed to meet during the first quarter of 2021 to review the operational phase of the implementation of the Protocol on island.

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[UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: open letter from Ambassador Johnston to business in Ireland](#)

On Christmas Eve, we all got an early present: the conclusion, after 9 months, of a [Trade and Co-operation Agreement between the UK and the EU](#), and the conclusion, after four and a half years – almost to the day – of the process begun with the UK's referendum vote to leave the EU.

At the end of this year, I'd like to thank the business community in Ireland for your engagement, support and all the contributions you have made during this period, and I want to set out how the UK government sees the prospects for the new year and beyond.

I've been delighted to see that government, political leaders and business groups across Ireland have welcomed the Agreement, while recognising that business will need ongoing advice and support to adapt to the new circumstances.

Agreeing the deal involved compromise on both sides and both sides had to accept outcomes different from those they initially wanted. In other words, it was like any negotiation, or indeed any business deal: give and take prevailed.

It's a good deal for the UK and the EU, and in particular for the UK and Ireland. It will enable strong business to business and people to people connections to flourish North-South and East-West. And it confirms the particular arrangements and advantages to be enjoyed by Northern Ireland from the Withdrawal Agreement last year, reflecting the commitments both the UK and Ireland have given with regard to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. This also recognises and supports the depth and importance of the supply chains between Northern Ireland and Ireland, especially in the agri-food sector.

More broadly, the new UK/EU agreement enables the enormous trading and economic relationship between the UK and our European partners and friends. It provides an important degree of continuity for both the UK and EU economies by enabling businesses on both sides of the Channel – and the Irish

Sea – to continue a deep and close trading relationship.

Given the huge scale of trade between the UK and Ireland – €1.4 billion a week in both directions – that really matters.

This deal delivers important outcomes for the business world in both countries. It secures:

- 100% tariff liberalisation. This is the first time the EU has agreed a zero tariff zero quota deal with another trading partner and this is the largest bilateral trade deal in the world (by volume of goods)
- continued market access across a broad scope of key service sectors, including professional and business services, supporting new and continued investment between businesses. It also means that business travellers will be able to easily move between the EU and the UK for short-term visits, and the agreement on financial services ensures financial stability and consumer protection

Beyond business, but just as important, the deal allows the UK, Ireland and the EU as a whole to work together on a range of challenges. It provides for:

- future cooperation between the UK and EU on law enforcement and judicial cooperation to help protect the public and bring criminals to justice. As well as cooperation on emerging security challenges, such as security of information, cyber security and health security, including continuing to work together on tackling the spread of COVID-19. We will build on all this in our bilateral work with Ireland
- continued partnerships between UK and European research and science experts – through not only Horizon Europe, but also the Euratom Research and Training programme, and the space programme, Copernicus

I know businesses in Ireland are well aware, not least because of the excellent work of the Irish Government, Ibec, the British Irish Chamber of Commerce, the Irish Exporters Association and, I hope, our own Embassy efforts, of the changes that are nevertheless occurring at the end of 2020 as we leave the Single Market and Customs Union.

It's important to recognise that those changes still apply even with this FTA and we will continue to work with you to support businesses and citizens adapt to them. The Embassy team are here to help with any queries and please do make us aware of any outstanding issues or concerns related to this transition that businesses are facing.

With the framework of the new UK/EU Agreement we can look forward to a new phase in our co-operation.

For reasons not only of history and geography but also of people, society, security, economics and peace, the UK/Ireland relationship is critical to us. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach have talked already of the need to develop our bilateral co-operation as we enter this new period.

That will be a big task for me and the Embassy team in 2021, and one to which I hugely look forward.

As both countries emerge from the pandemic, we can look forward to tackling new challenges and opportunities together. Everything from conflict prevention and peacebuilding as partners on the UN Security Council, to the fight for our planet's future as the UK prepares to host the historic UN conference in Glasgow in November 2021, plus building on the Embassy's 'Joining the Dots' programme to support regional economic development and our respective 'levelling-up' strategies.

Finally, and to return to the immediate business agenda, the Irish market will remain hugely important for the UK as will the UK market to Ireland, given our proximity, the depth of integration of business ties and our shared ambitions in clean and emerging technologies and sectors. From floating offshore wind to biotech, electric vehicles to the next generation of construction, there are huge opportunities for Irish and UK businesses, and my team stands ready to support you in this.

With every best wish to you and your loved ones for a happy, healthy, peace and prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Johnston