

# **Joint Statement by the UK and Mexico**

**The Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Mexican States welcome the signing of the UK-Mexico Trade Continuity Agreement, marked by a meeting today between the Secretary of State for International Trade of the United Kingdom, Elizabeth Truss, and the Minister of Economy of Mexico, Graciela Márquez Colín, on 15 December 2020.**

**The Agreement provides for continuity in trade between Mexico and the United Kingdom after the end of this year. The Agreement is intended to be transitional in nature. The UK and Mexico agree to begin negotiations on a new and ambitious Free Trade Agreement in 2021.**

Today's agreement will maintain preferential access for trade between Mexico and the UK following the end of the UK's Transition Period with the EU on 31 December 2020, when the EU-Mexico Global Agreement will no longer apply to the UK. Both sides will strive to bring the agreement into force on 1 January 2021, subject to parliamentary procedures and legislative approvals.

The agreement will provide certainty for UK and Mexican businesses trading the goods and services that make up our bilateral trade relationship, which accounts for over 5 billion dollars per year. It will deliver vital coverage for the automotive, pharmaceutical, textiles, agriculture, food and drink and other manufacturing industries. This will prevent the additional duty burden that would be levied under WTO MFN terms.

This follows the recent signing of the UK – Mexico Agreement on the Mutual Recognition and Protection of Designations for Spirit Drinks, an important geographical indications agreement between the United Kingdom and Mexico to protect the spirits of both countries. This agreement will protect our traditional spirits like Irish and Scottish Whisky and Tequila, Sotol and Mezcal.

Investment relations will continue to take place under the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United Mexican States for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments.

## **Future Relationship**

The agreement secured today, also commits the UK and Mexico to begin negotiations on a new ambitious and modern UK-Mexico Trade Agreement at the earliest opportunity in 2021 and strive to conclude it within three years. Both sides have agreed that a future deal should be at least as liberalising as the recently agreed EU-Mexico Modernised Agreement, but with ambition to go further in areas of mutual interest. In making today's announcement, the

UK reiterates its intention to formally apply in early 2021 to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and Mexico expresses its support for this process. Both sides have agreed that our future bilateral negotiations should run in parallel to this process.

Today's announcement is in line with the commitment to an ambitious future trading relationship which both countries made under the landmark 'Mexico and UK: Partnership for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth', which the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, and Foreign Minister, Marcelo Ebrard, signed in Mexico City in August 2019.

## **Political Dialogue and Cooperation**

The UK and Mexico remain committed to a joint political dialogue covering all bilateral and international matters of mutual interest, including continuing and intensifying all areas of current cooperation.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to implementing the principles outlined in the UK-Mexico Partnership for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, signed by our Foreign Ministers in August 2019. Maintaining our bilateral political cooperation as specified in the Partnership remains a top priority for our future relationship. This includes cooperating closely on foreign policy, an inclusive COVID-19 recovery, and international peace and security.

It encompasses a common vision on the reduction of poverty and inequality, of action on climate change and environmental protection, promotion of sustainable investment, the protection of the oceans and of biodiversity, the defence of free trade, multilateralism and the international rules-based system. We will continue to regularly discuss our shared values of democracy, the comprehensive promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law, gender equality and social inclusion.

We restate and emphasise our shared commitment to effective multilateralism and international cooperation as the basis for addressing regional and global challenges.

The UK-Mexico relationship continues to grow, and we look forward to working together to deepen the political, economic, social and people-to-people ties between our two nations.

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## **New adoption and special guardianship leader appointed**

Dr Krish Kandiah has been appointed as the new Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB).

A critical friend to the Government on adoption policies for many years, Dr Kandiah comes to the role with the unique experience of being an adoptive parent himself who is passionate about championing for more people from all walks of life to come forward as loving adoptive parents.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford announced his new role during a speech at Coram British Association of Adoption and Fostering's (CoramBAAF) 40th anniversary event on Monday 14 December.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

As we get closer to Christmas, a special time of year that brings everyone together, it is a terribly sad fact that there are some children who do not have a family to celebrate with. We simply cannot overstate how important a stable loving family is.

I am delighted to announce Krish Kandiah as the new Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, who will work with us to make improvements to the adoption system, boosting vital support for adopters and their families so every child can be placed in a loving, stable home.

The CoramBAAF event will celebrate the significant contribution it has made over the last 40 years to the lives of adoptive families, and those in special guardianships or kinship care arrangements, including helping to shape adoption policies, to give children hope, security and a loving family.

As chair of the ASGLB, which Coram helped set up in 2014, Dr Krish Kandiah will play an instrumental role in driving improvements in the sector, working closely with the Department for Education to continue raising the bar with the adoption system and in the lives of vulnerable children.

Dr Krish Kandiah, new chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) said:

Right now there are over 2,550 children waiting for adoption. Each one of them needs a unique loving family to commit to them for life despite all the trauma they have faced in the past and whatever their futures might hold.

I count it a huge privilege to take on the chairing of the Leadership Board and am looking forward to working with colleagues to find parents for all the children that are waiting and to provide great support for all adopted families. I take on this role as an adopted father, a foster parent and a birth dad keen to find the right solution for every child.

The Department for Education has invested in frontline charities through £750 million of funding to help them continue their vital work throughout this

year. As part of this, it has provided £2.8 million in funding to 19 Voluntary Adoption Agencies, to help enable them to continue their work with prospective adopters and supporting existing adoptive families throughout the pandemic.

The support for adoptive families builds on the Education Secretary's [intervention](#) during National Adoption Week in October, where he launched a recruitment campaign to reach out to churches, mosques and other community groups starting with a pilot service in London and Birmingham, to encourage more potential Black and other minority ethnic adopters to come forward. He also urged local authorities to help break down the misconception of the perfect ethnic match that places too high a burden on parents who want to adopt.

Minister Ford's speech comes as the Department for Education prepares to launch the independently-led Care Review soon, which will support improvements in the children's social care system for every child, including those for whom adoption may not be the right choice.

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## **Second large donation to fund school's major IT project**

Friends of Gosforth School (FOGS) has received a further £3,000 donation from LLWR to help finance the purchase of 16 iPads for students.

The group is in the final stage of a three year plan, initially to purchase 60 iPads and the infrastructure required to allow them to function in and around the primary school.

LLWR donated £3,500 to the scheme in 2019 and the funding has helped the school ensure that disadvantaged youngsters with no access to personal computers at home receive equipment amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teachers have been able to send work via the school app to be completed at home, and also relay key messages around COVID guidelines.

Rachel Jones, Chair of FOGS, said: "We are delighted to have been awarded £3,000 by LLWR this year, in our third year and final phase of our IT Funding Project.

"This will allow us to purchase additional iPads for use by the pupils and teachers on a daily basis, giving access to a broader range of activities to engage the children and deliver positive learning and results.

"The kids have loved completing a wide variety of IT activities which have enhanced their learning of core curriculum subjects. The iPads have allowed

the pupils to work in small groups or pairs to complete coding, make videos and explore other means of recording their work and achievements.”

The latest FOGS target is to fund 66 iPads, ensuring one per two pupils, plus one for each teacher, and 50 have so far been purchased, plus a Mac Mini, and the school wi-fi has been upgraded at a cost of £2,100.

“Increasing the number of iPads we have in school is particularly important to us this year to help us use the equipment COVID safely and reducing the number of children needing to share equipment,” Rachel added.

FOGS is a charity comprising volunteer parents and community members, plus school representatives, launched to raise funds to enhance the learning experience of pupils.

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## Northern Ireland Secretary to Outline Centenary Plans

Secretary of State Brandon Lewis is to formally launch the UK Government’s plans to mark Northern Ireland’s centenary next year.

At a Policy Exchange event in Belfast later, Mr Lewis will announce a £3million funding commitment for the anniversary, unveil centenary branding – ‘Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100’ – as well as outlining further details regarding the centenary programme.

Speaking ahead of today’s launch, Mr Lewis said: “2021 marks 100 years since the creation of Northern Ireland, which paved the way for the formation of the United Kingdom as we know it today. We will use this opportunity to hear untold stories, to promote Northern Ireland on the world stage and to celebrate its people, culture, traditions and enterprise; and its vital contribution to the United Kingdom.

This past year has not been easy but I believe we are seeing light at the end of the tunnel. As we look forward to 2021, the Government is planning an exciting programme to promote Northern Ireland’s potential across the UK, and also internationally. Next year is the time to shine a light on what makes Northern Ireland so special, and to look forward to a bright future.

Last month, the Government launched the Shared History Fund, making available £1million to support the engagement of a wide range of arts, heritage, voluntary, community and other non-profit organisations with the history of the centenary of Northern Ireland

The Centenary Forum is meeting regularly, ensuring we listen to diverse perspectives as we create a bold and ambitious centenary programme. The Forum provides an opportunity for a broad spectrum of people, including those from across the political parties, business, tourism and the voluntary and community sectors, to come together to shape the delivery of the programme of events to mark this significant national anniversary. The Historical Advisory Panel is also working to provide advice to the Forum, and to the Government, on the historical facts of the period, as well as seeking to encourage and support a deeper public awareness of the history of the centenary.

## **Notes to editors**

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# **6/2020: Council Tax information letter** **– 15 December 2020**

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