

Press release: Minister Duncan statement on meeting with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza

FCO Minister of State for Europe and the Americas the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan said:

I met the Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Jorge Arreaza, in London today. Mr Arreaza set out his Government's view of developments in Venezuela.

I expressed the UK's profound concern at the continuing deterioration in the political, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela. I reiterated the UK's firm view that the establishment of the unconstitutional Constituent Assembly was an unnecessary and divisive act that was not supported by the majority of the Venezuelan people, and that a strong and independent parliament is key to a successful democracy.

I noted that talks between the Venezuelan Government and Opposition are currently stalled, and called on the government to ensure the appropriate context for restarting talks, including respect for democratic institutions and values. There can be no progress in resolving the crisis in Venezuela until there are serious, constructive negotiations.

The UK also discussed Venezuela with EU partners today at the Political and Security Committee meeting in Brussels. Together, we are considering a range of possible actions. As I said to Mr Arreaza, we are watching the management of the 15 October Venezuelan State Governors' elections closely, as they are a key test of the Venezuelan Government's respect for democracy.

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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[Press release: Environment Agency approves Third Energy's hydraulic fracture plan](#)

The Environment Agency has approved (Tuesday 10 October) Third Energy's hydraulic fracture plan (frack plan) for its well site at Kirby Misperton in

North Yorkshire.

An approved frack plan is required before the company starts fracking under the conditions of the operator's environmental permit, which was issued by the Environment Agency in April 2016 after extensive public consultation.

The Environment Agency is confident, following a thorough assessment of the frack plan, that Third Energy has demonstrated it has the right procedures in place to control and monitor the fracturing process. The plan will be available to view on the Environment Agency's Citizen Space website.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

We are satisfied with Third Energy's arrangements for monitoring during and after hydraulic fracturing. The Environment Agency is committed to ensuring that shale gas operations meet the highest environmental standards and can only go ahead if they are safe for people and the environment.

Our environmental permits set out the legal conditions needed to protect groundwater, surface water and air quality and to ensure the safe storage, management and disposal of waste. Our staff will continue to carry out regular on-site checks and audits to ensure that the company is meeting the high standards we require.

The fracture plan and other operational documents relating to Third Energy's operation can be found on the Environment Agency's [Citizen Space website](#).

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[News story: North East, Yorkshire and the Humber top apprentices and apprentice employers announced](#)

The National Apprenticeship Awards, now in their 14th year, showcase the successes and benefits of apprenticeships across England in the last year. We have announced the winners and highly commended entries at an awards ceremony held at the Royal York Hotel.

Apprentices and employers fought off tough competition by demonstrating how businesses are growing their own talent pool with apprenticeships and how apprentices have made a significant contribution to their workplace.

This year's winners for the North East are:

Apprentice categories:

- Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Dawn Cochrane, South Tees Health Trust
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Alice Hurren, Department for Education
- Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Site Licence Companies award for

Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Chris Armstrong,
GlaxoSmithKline

- Apprenticeship Champion: Amanda Graham, North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust

And highly commended:

- Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Paige Reavley, Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Tilly Greer, GlaxoSmithKline
- Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Site Licence Companies award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Sophie Tweddle, GlaxoSmithKline
- Apprenticeship Champion: Karen Hookham, Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust and Peter Calvert, Tad Web Solutions Ltd

Employer categories:

- Small Employer of the Year: McCarrick Construction
- Large Employer of the Year: Home Group
- The Open University award for Macro Employer of the Year: Lookers plc
- Rolls-Royce award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: Magnet

And highly commended:

- Large Employer of the Year: Go North East and Hays Travel
- The Open University award for Macro Employer of the Year: Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust and Accenture
- Rolls-Royce award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

This year's winners for Yorkshire and the Humber are:

Apprentice categories:

- Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Emily Faulkner, G E V Wind Power
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Hannah Magowan, Dale Power Solutions
- Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Site Licence Companies award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Mickyle Clark, Dale Power Solutions Ltd
- Apprenticeship Champion: Sarah Barley, South Hunsley School

And highly commended:

- Intermediate Apprentice of the Year: Emily Grimes, York College
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year: Calum James Finn, Nestle UK Ltd. and Innes Macdonald, British Army
- Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Site Licence Companies award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year: Benjamin Bruin, Openreach
- Apprenticeship Champion: Rebecca Edgecumbe, Interserve Learning & Employment and Mandy Scott, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Employer categories:

- Medium Employer of the Year: Ebsford Environmental Ltd
- Large Employer of the Year: Dale Power Solutions Ltd
- The Open University award for Macro Employer of the Year: Lloyds Banking Group
- BAE Systems award for Newcomer SME Employer of the Year: Blue Logic
- Rolls-Royce award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: YBS Group (Yorkshire Building Society)

And highly commended:

- Medium Employer of the Year: Michael and Margaret Naylor and Associates
- Large Employer of the Year: Liberty Speciality Steels and Syngenta
- The Open University award for Macro Employer of the Year: Nestlé
- Rolls-Royce award for Newcomer Large Employer of the Year: Zenith and Dovecote Park Ltd

Following the 6 regional ceremonies taking place across England, winners from each category will have their entries sent for national judging. Three from each category will then be selected as national finalists. The very best employer category entries are also in the running to feature in the prestigious Centrica sponsored Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list 2017.

Skills and Apprenticeships Minister Anne Milton said:

The National Apprenticeship Awards are a fantastic way to demonstrate the incredible benefits and contributions of both apprentices and their employers across the country.

My personal congratulations go out to everyone who has taken part in the National Apprenticeship Awards so far, and also to those heading to the national finals. You truly are worthy ambassadors for apprenticeships.

Sue Husband, director, National Apprenticeship Service, added:

The National Apprenticeship Awards allow talented apprentices and committed employers from across our regions to receive well-deserved recognition for their apprenticeship achievements. In turn I hope that the exposure given to winners encourages more employers and individuals to get involved.

Winners recognised today in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber region show the range of sectors and variety of job roles apprenticeships are available in, and how they can deliver the skills employers need. I congratulate all winners and highly commended finalists on their success. For those heading to the national finals, I wish them the very best of luck for the next stage of the competition.

National award winners and the Top 100 Employers will be announced at a ceremony to be held on 18 January 2018 in London.

This year's sponsors for the North East, Yorkshire and Humber awards are YH Training, Px Group, Yorkshire Housing, Leeds College of Building and Baltic Training.

To find out more information about [apprenticeships](#) or the [apprenticeship awards](#) visit GOV.UK. Alternatively call 08000 150 600 or follow @apprenticeships on Twitter and National Apprenticeship Service on LinkedIn.