



Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade  
Department for International Trade  
King Charles Street  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2AH

3rd November 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

The Conservative manifesto included a promise to ensure that the UK's trade deals after Brexit would be fair, in particular towards developing nations. Now is the time to make that promise a reality. The UK has a unique opportunity to ensure that the concerns and priorities of developing countries are put front and centre in their trade relations. We are concerned that the recent deals with Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire have been rushed through without proper consideration of their development impacts. We are writing to you to urge you to drop proposals for Economic Partnership Agreements and instead offer Kenya, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon an interim market access provision.

The situation is urgent: in just eight weeks' time, at the end of the Brexit transition period, producers in Kenya, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon could face a significant hike in tariffs on products such as bananas, flowers and cocoa butter. Coming together with the serious impacts of Covid, this could push large numbers of vulnerable workers, farmers and small-scale producers into increasingly exploitative and low-paid work, or severe poverty. This has serious impacts for women, who not only comprise the majority of workers in labour intensive export production but will also carry most of the additional caring responsibilities generated by Covid.

The response of the Department for International Trade has been to attempt to rush through trade deals with these countries. However this is likely to undermine development objectives such as decent work and industrial development. The most immediate is regional integration, which has for several decades been a key priority of African countries. Better regional integration would boost regional trade, support country and regional industrial strategies and bolster against international trade fluctuations. Signing trade deals with just three countries will undermine this goal and force countries to erect new trade barriers at their borders.

We are writing to urge you to press pause and give the UK and its negotiating partners time to craft a trade relationship that better supports development priorities. The UK should offer Kenya, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon an interim preferential market access arrangement to prevent negative impacts on producers and workers and allow time to negotiate an arrangement that supports development goals. This should be conditional on respect for ILO standards with effective independent enforcement processes, including a role for trade unions and civil society organisations.

Yours sincerely

Girish Menon, CEO, ActionAid

Stephanie Draper, Chief Executive, Bond

Christine Allen, CEO, CAFOD

Nick Dearden, Director, Global Justice Now

Sarah Hiron, Trustee, One World Week

Ruth Bergan, Senior Advisor, Trade Justice Movement

Charlotte Timson, CEO, Traidcraft Exchange

