

Rt. Hon. Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade  
Department for International Trade  
3 Whitehall Place  
London  
SW1A 2HP

29 August 2020

Dear Ms Truss

We write to you as NGOs, trade unions and other civil society organisations who are members of the Department for International Trade's Expert Trade Advisory Groups (ETAGs).

We are very disappointed and concerned to learn that the government is standing down its sectoral ETAGs and ending thematic ETAGs as formal entities, with unclear commitments for future meeting arrangements. The new Trade Advisory Groups appear to consist almost entirely of business organisations, with no representation from civil society.

The input of civil society organisations, including trade unions and NGOs, is essential for building consensus around the UK's new trade policy, and ensuring that post-Brexit trade deals work for people and the planet. We believe our organisations have a lot to offer in terms of expertise on trade, and insight into how trade affects ordinary people and the environment beyond business interests. Consultation is the underpinning of good international trade policy; a coherent national approach, with broad support, would allow for the UK to come to the negotiating table with clear objectives and would project confidence to prospective trading partners. Reducing input for civil society raises the concern that the government is not taking seriously the implications of trade for the environment, international development, workers' rights and social welfare.

We would like to meet with you to discuss this further, and to seek assurances that civil society organisations will not be sidelined as the UK develops its own independent trade policy and negotiates new trade deals.

Yours sincerely

Dr Anna Watson, Head of Advocacy, CHEM Trust  
Charlotte Timson, CEO, Traidcraft Exchange  
Dave Prentis, General Secretary, UNISON  
James Thornton, CEO, ClientEarth  
Ruth Bergan, Senior Adviser, Trade Justice Movement  
Shaun Spiers, Chair, Greener UK