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Convener  
Economy and Fair Work Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
By email to:  
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18 February 2025

Dear Colin,

## **REPORT OF INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP – TRADE MEETING – 22 JANUARY 2025**

I am writing to provide the Committee with a report of the Inter-Ministerial Group - Trade (IMG-Trade) meeting which took place on 22 January 2025.

The IMG-Trade is the primary ministerial forum to discuss matters of international trade concerning the UK Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government. This most recently meeting, the first since the UK General Election in July 2024, was chaired by Douglas Alexander MP, UK Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security. I represented the Scottish Government and the meeting also included Ministerial colleagues from the other Devolved Nations as well as Secretaries of State from each of the UK Territorial Offices.

The agenda for this meeting included two main items;

- (i) a scene setter covering various UK Government trade priorities
- (ii) a discussion on the ongoing development of a UK Trade Strategy.

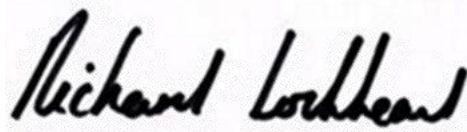
During the scene setter Minister Alexander outlined his Government's high-level trade policy priorities, including an ambition for a positive reset in relations with Devolved Governments, improving trade relations with the EU and USA and his Department's wider trade agreement negotiation priorities. I welcomed Mr Alexander's commitment to positive engagement with Devolved Governments and his comments around a new approach to engagement with the EU, while also noting the importance of the USA as a trading partner for Scotland. I also noted that officials have reported more constructive working relationships between the Scottish

Government and the Department for Business and Trade over recent months, while recognising that there remains progress to be made.

On the UK Trade Strategy, Minister Alexander provided an overview of each of the key topic areas for inclusion in this strategy. Alongside other Devolved Ministers, I highlighted the significant responsibilities and interests of our Governments in trade policy and delivery, including for example in supporting our businesses to export, an area where there are concurrent powers between the UK and Devolved Governments. Minister Alexander underlined his commitment to ensuring appropriate involvement of Devolved Governments in the strategy, directing officials to proceed with the development of a detailed plan for engagement. I welcomed this commitment and have similarly requested my officials engage constructively and at pace in this process.

Reflecting our ambitions to constructively influence the development of this strategy, I have however, already proactively shared the Scottish Government's initial views in a letter to Minister Alexander on 17 January 2025. The Annex to this letter, detailing these views, has now been published and is available [here](#). This ensures that the Scottish Government's views are clearly on record and available to the public and stakeholders.

I would welcome any feedback from the Committee on this recent IMG-Trade and our engagement in the development of a UK Trade Strategy.



**RICHARD LOCHHEAD**

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