



Department for
International Trade

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Mr Keith Ward
Chief Executive
The British Medical Association (BMA)
BMA House
Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9JP

9th March 2018

Dear Mr. Ward,

I read with interest the Press and Journal website article on 2 February entitled 'Brexit poses substantial risk to public health, doctors warn'. As Secretary of State responsible for delivering a new trade policy framework for the UK as we leave the EU, I wanted to write to you on the trade related issues raised.

The NHS and Future Trade Agreements

There is no threat to the NHS from any future trade agreements. I, the Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Care, and the Prime Minister have repeatedly made the Government's position on the protection of the NHS clear. Indeed, as the PM said in her New Year message "we will continue to invest in our NHS and ensure it can deliver a world-class service now and for generations to come". We are committed to protecting the UK's right to regulate public services. As we leave the EU, the UK will continue to ensure that rigorous protections are included in all trade agreements to which it is party. It will remain up to the UK, including the devolved administrations, to decide how public services are run and who is best placed to provide them.

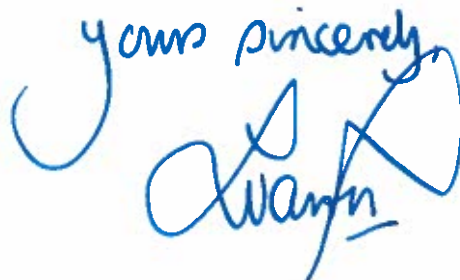
Investor Protection

The right of governments to regulate in the public interest (including in the interest of public health) is recognised in international law, including in trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. We have more than 90 bilateral investment treaties in place with other countries and there has never been a successful ISDS claim brought against the UK, nor has the threat of potential claims affected the Government's legislative programme.

Standards

In the BMA statement, Dr Bennie asked to “hear clearly from the UK Government that any post Brexit trade deals won’t ...reduce the high standards placed on imported food”. As the Prime Minister said in Florence last year, we are “committed not only to protecting high standards, but strengthening them”. We are committed to upholding and strengthening our high standards in public health and safety. When it comes to products imported to the UK – quality, safety and performance will continue to be paramount. Without exception, imports must meet all the relevant UK product rules and regulations.

As a Doctor, I am a passionate supporter of the NHS. I want to be clear on the issues the BMA has raised and hope this letter is helpful in clarifying matters. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my officials.

yours sincerely


THE RT HON DR LIAM FOX MP
Secretary of State, Department for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade