



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Alicia Kearns MP

Chair, Foreign Affairs Commons Select Committee  
via email

Angus MacNeil MP

Chair, International Trade Commons Select Committee  
via email

9th November 2022

Dear Alicia and Angus,

I am writing to you in your respective roles as Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Chair of the International Trade Committee, to ask whether you would consider launching a joint inquiry into the interaction between UK foreign policy and international trade policy.

The UK has a long, proud history of protecting human rights around the world. We must not let this be undermined - which is why our foreign policy and international trade policy must be properly joined up, to make use of important levers for promoting human rights worldwide.

My constituents are particularly concerned about this in regards to Sri Lanka. For many years, the UK Government has expressed concerns about the Sri Lankan Government's treatment of the Tamil community - and rightly designated Sri Lanka as a Human Rights Priority country. Yet today, Sri Lanka continues to enjoy the equivalent Generalised Scheme of Preferences benefits under the UK's trade policy, despite these continuing grave concerns.

When I served as Trade Minister between 2010 and 2012, I led efforts to ensure the UK and EU did not give trade benefits - the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) - to Sri Lanka, because of Sri Lanka's failures to meet the human rights and other conditions they are supposed to meet under that scheme.

Regrettably, the UK Government worked within the EU in 2015-2016 to ultimately give Sri Lanka those trade benefits - even though the grave human rights concerns I and others had highlighted had not been addressed. In my view, if the UK withdrew those trade benefits, we would encourage the whole of the EU to follow us.

Far too often, the UK's foreign policy aims and trade policy aims undercut each other - and we have seen this time and again in recent years. Until the invasion of Ukraine, the UK Government failed to take meaningful action on Russian interference in the UK economy, instead choosing to prioritise economic access - despite plentiful evidence in the Russia

Rt Hon Sir Edward Davey MP



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Report, the Foreign Affairs Committee's report 'Moscow's Gold', and even the Government's own Integrated Review.

And as Trade Secretary, Liz Truss oversaw the largest ever increase in our reliance on trade with China - only to then, rightly, identify our dependence on China as a problem when she became Foreign Secretary.

If we have learned anything from the last year - and from the challenging geopolitical situation now facing us - it is that the UK's trade and foreign policy must be joined up.

A joint inquiry into the interaction between the UK's foreign policy and international trade policy would be a meaningful way to encourage the Government to approach these policy areas in a more joined-up manner. I trust that you will both do everything in your power to ensure this happens.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Ed Davey'.

Ed Davey MP  
Leader of the Liberal Democrats  
MP, Kingston & Surbiton