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Daniel Johnson MSP
Convener
Economy and Fair Work Committee
The Scottish Parliament
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21 January 2026

Dear Daniel,

MEETING OF INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP FOR TRADE (IMG-TRADE)

I am writing to update the Committee on the recent meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Trade (IMG-Trade), which took place on 08 January 2026.

The IMG-Trade serves as the principal forum for ministerial discussion on international trade matters involving the UK Government, Scottish Government, Northern Ireland Executive and Welsh Government. This meeting marked the third sitting of the group since the change of UK Government in July 2024. It was the first occasion on which Sir Chris Bryant MP chaired the group following his appointment as the Department for Business and Trade's Minister for Trade in September 2025. This was my first engagement with the Minister, representing the Scottish Government alongside other Devolved Government Ministers.

The agenda included the following items:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Programme Update
3. Review of Inter-Ministerial Group for Trade
4. UK-US Economic Prosperity Deal (EPD)

The discussion was largely introductory and reflective, with Minister Bryant acknowledging the concerns expressed by Devolved Governments regarding the insufficient level of engagement in recent months, which had been communicated through both ministerial and official channels.

Throughout the meeting, I emphasised that current engagement falls short of the standards agreed for information sharing and Devolved Government involvement. In particular, I stressed the need for improved engagement on UK-US EPD negotiations, highlighting the recent UK-US pharmaceutical agreement and Scotch Whisky as clear examples of devolved interests that require meaningful engagement. I also set out the Scottish Government's views on other priority areas, including the Airbus/Boeing dispute.

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In line with the existing Terms of Reference for this IMG, Minister Bryant agreed to convene the group quarterly - subject to practical constraints. Given the upcoming Devolved Elections, it was agreed that the IMG-Trade would look to meet again in March if possible.

I would be pleased to answer any questions the Committee may have on the recent IMG-Trade meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Lochhead". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

RICHARD LOCHHEAD

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