



St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
T: 0300 244 4000

Joan McAlpine MSP
Convener
European and External Relations Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

9 September 2016

Dear Joan

It is my pleasure to give evidence on the Scottish Government's engagement with domestic and international partners on its work to explore options for protecting Scotland's relationship with the EU at the next session of the EERC. I have also updated Parliament on this work in the Chamber on 7 September. This forms part of our commitment to regularly report back to the Parliament and the European and External Relations Committee on its progress as instructed in Motion S5M-00601 of 28 June 2016.

In keeping with this commitment, I would like to propose the following ways to update you on the three main strands of this work in the future. These three areas are: engagement with the European Union institutions and Member States; the work of the Standing Council on Europe; and intergovernmental negotiations with the UK Government over the UK's and Scotland's future relationship with the EU.

Engagement with EU institutions and Member States:

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs will send regular written updates to the Committee to outline the engagement we have undertaken with EU institutions and EU member states as part of the mandate given in the above-mentioned Motion.

Standing Council:

In your letter of 15 July 2016 you have asked me to provide the Committee with an update of the Standing Council for Europe's work and I have provided you with the minutes of the Council's first meeting in my letter of 25 July to Kezia Dugdale which was copied to the Committee. As I set out when I established the group, the Standing Council is a source of advice for me and other Ministers in relation to the EU. Consequently it is constituted independently of Government and members participate in a personal capacity. The Council has so far met twice and may also work in smaller groups to address specific issues, working alongside both Government and other individuals as required. My officials will work with the Council to make material available as appropriate and as the work of the Council allows.

Intergovernmental Negotiations

At this point discussions between the Scottish Government, other devolved administrations and the UK Government about the exact format for negotiations and co-operation regarding the UK leaving the European Union are still ongoing. We will inform the EERC and the Finance and Constitution committee on our reporting mechanism on this process as soon as a framework has been agreed.

In addition to this regular reporting the Government will of course inform Parliament as appropriate in regards to major developments and decisions as they occur. I will also welcome Conveners' questions about the Government's activities under the mandate of Motion S5M-00601 at the forthcoming Conveners Group sessions.

I am looking forward to my appearance at the EERC on 14 September and to our ongoing engagement with the Parliament.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nicola Sturgeon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

NICOLA STURGEON