27 January 2017

Dear Joan,

I am writing to provide you with an update on the Scottish Government actions from the third meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations [JMC (EN)], which took place on 19 January. There was no Joint Communiqué agreed at the meeting, due to the Northern Ireland situation.

The other attendees were:

Ministers from the UK Government: the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Rt Hon David Davis, the Minister of State for Exiting the EU, Rt Hon David Jones MP; the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP; the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon David Mundell MP; the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP; the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Rt Hon David Gauke MP; the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Rt Hon Alan Duncan MP; and, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Ben Gummer MP.

Ministers from the Welsh Government: Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Mark Drakeford AM.

Ministers from the Northern Ireland Executive: Minister for Infrastructure, Chris Hazzard MLA; and, Junior Minister, Executive Office Alastair Ross, MLA.

During the meeting the UK Government led a discussion on the work around the Great Repeal Bill. We also continued our discussions on Market Access, revisiting a paper tabled previously by the Northern Ireland Executive.
I led a discussion on the European Single Market and the four freedoms, as set out in our paper ‘Scotland’s Place in Europe’ and agreed with the UK Government that our officials would take forward technical discussions on the proposals raised in that paper.

Throughout the meeting, I reiterated that in our view membership of the European Single Market and the benefits that flow from it, including free movement of labour, is essential for Scotland’s economic prosperity. I also repeatedly pressed the need for the devolved administrations to be properly involved in the UK Government’s decision-making process for Brexit as was originally envisaged in the Terms of Reference for JMC (EN).

No agenda has been set yet for the next meeting of JMC(EN) which I now understand is to take place on 08 February in London, but I will continue to share what I can with you in keeping with the Written Agreement on Inter-Governmental Relations between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

I am writing in similar terms to the Convenor of the Finance and Constitution Committee.

MICHAEL RUSSELL