



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

Bruce Crawford MSP
Convener
Finance and Constitution Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

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I wrote to you on 18 December 2018 to alert members to the Plenary session of the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC), which as you know was subsequently held in 10 Downing Street on 19 December. Under the terms of our written agreement, I am now writing to provide you with the attached copy of the Joint Communiqué from that meeting, as well as my own reflections on discussions.

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations, Michael Russell, accompanied me to the meeting. The Prime Minister chaired the meeting and I also had a short bilateral with her. At both meetings the focus of our discussions was on matters relating to the UK exiting the EU.

I expressed my deep dismay at the continued uncertainty caused to the public and business by the Prime Minister's decision to postpone Westminster's meaningful vote on her deal. I made clear that I did not believe the terms of her deal are satisfactory for either the UK or Scotland and encouraged her to think again about what might be possible taking into account the expectations of the public, Parliament and the EU.

I further suggested that it was deeply damaging for the UK Government to continue to countenance the suggestion that the UK may leave the EU without a deal and that, given the unnecessary damage that such a scenario would cause, the Prime Minister should take it off the table. That said, through the actions of her government, we are forced into a position where we must give consideration to contingency planning. I explained the implications for the Scottish Government in redirecting massive resource to this task. Mr Russell made clear that the funding allocated to the task by UK Government and the resulting consequentials would be woefully insufficient and there was a lack of clarity on whether that funding would continue for as long as mitigation might be required. Mr Russell also highlighted continuing issues around engagement between UK Government and the Devolved administrations on certain aspects of no deal planning, including on medical provisions and in public messaging.

You will be aware that UK Government's white paper on future provisions for immigration was released on the day of our meeting. I expressed deep concern to the Prime Minister about the lack of engagement with the Devolved Administrations in the formulation of these proposals and the lack of advanced notification of the release. I made clear the devastating impact that the proposed changes to the immigration system would have on the demographics and working population of Scotland. I also spoke of the detrimental cultural impact of presenting the UK as a country that did not recognise and welcome the diversity and talent that immigration provides.

Officials updated the JMC on the progress of the quadrilateral review of inter-governmental relations and we noted their commitment to present finalised proposals at a future Plenary meeting.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Sturgeon', with a stylized flourish below the name.

NICOLA STURGEON

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE (PLENARY) 19 DECEMBER 2018 NO. 10 DOWNING STREET

A plenary meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee was held today in Downing Street, chaired by the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Theresa May MP. The participants were:

- from HM Government the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Theresa May, MP, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon David Lidington MP, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon David Mundell MP, the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP;
- from the Scottish Government the First Minister, Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP and the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations, Michael Russell MSP; and
- from the Welsh Government the First Minister, Mark Drakeford AM and Jeremy Miles AM, Counsel General Designate and Brexit Minister.

David Sterling, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service attended the meeting in the continued absence of a Northern Ireland Executive.

The Prime Minister congratulated the First Minister of Wales on his appointment. The two principal agenda items at the meeting were exiting the European Union and the state of relations. Under the first item, the Prime Minister updated the First Ministers on negotiations with the European Union. The Committee discussed next steps on the UK's exit from the EU. Under the second item, the Committee noted progress on the review on intergovernmental relations and remitted further work to officials.