



Foreign Affairs Committee

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From The Chair

The Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP
Minister of State for Europe and the Americas
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles St
London SW1A 2AH

14 December 2016

Dear Alan,

Implications of leaving the EU for the UK's role in the world

Thank you for your letter of 5 December saying that the Government is not currently in a position to provide evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee on its inquiry into the implications for the UK if the two-year negotiating period mandated by Article 50 ends with no withdrawal agreement in place. The Committee considered your letter at its meeting today.

The Committee does not find the argument in your letter as to why no response is currently possible either clear or convincing. The Committee's report *Equipping the Government for Brexit* described as "gross negligence" the previous Government's failure to instruct the FCO and other key departments to plan for the possibility of a vote to leave the EU. That failure increased uncertainty both within the UK and among key international partners. If the Government did no preparatory work for the eventuality we are examining, it would be at least as negligent as Mr Cameron's Government.

It is hard to believe, however, that the Government is not considering the legal and technical issues and consequences of leaving the EU with no withdrawal agreement in place. The Government owes its analysis not just to Parliament, but to the wider public: there is a strong public interest in reducing uncertainty as far as possible, not least for businesses making investment decisions in the UK.

The Committee therefore asks that you reconsider your stance.

I would be grateful for a response by Monday 19 December. In the meantime, I will be placing this correspondence in the public domain.

Handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Crispin Blunt".

Crispin Blunt MP
Chair