



PRESIDENT'S QUARTERLY ADDRESS

Dear Members,

Let me begin by wishing you all the very best in 2020. It promises to be quite a year, kicking off with a bang and the United Kingdom's (UK) withdrawal from the European Union (EU) in just a few days time. All eyes are now on the future relationship and needless to say the Chamber will be at the heart of action in the months ahead.

With negotiations about to begin in earnest, it is vital for all sides to keep in mind that the EU and UK are key trading partners (the EU-UK trading relationship is essential for both parties with the EU exporting £357 Billion to the UK and importing £291 Billion) and will continue to share many joint opportunities and challenges; whether that be tackling climate change, regulating the data economy or the future of food, to name but just a few.

Recognising the new political context but also the practical realities of our intertwined economies, we believe that the end goal of the negotiations should be as close an economic relationship as possible, minimising as far as possible barriers to trade. The clock is ticking, and it is increasingly clear that zero tariffs and quotas in goods will be the immediate focus. However, we believe this should be just the beginning of a process that establishes a framework for much deeper future cooperation and partnership.

More immediately, given the significance of this change for our businesses and economies, we call on both the UK and the EU to ensure open and transparent consultation with all stakeholders, including the business community during the negotiations. Recognising the inevitable complication that will result from the new relationship and the potential for divergence, we also ask for a clear and transparent process post agreement for managing this change and resolving disputes. You will find [here](#) our initial paper on the future relationship. As the negotiations advance the Chamber will be developing further positions and if you would like to get involved, do get in touch.

In parallel to the EU negotiation, the importance of the UK's bilateral relationship with Belgium and its regions will inevitably increase. The Chamber's Business Trade and Investment (BTI) Committee is currently developing a revamped action plan, which aims to put the Chamber at the heart of the bilateral relationship and we have hit the ground running, partnering with the Wallonia Investment Agency (AWEX) at an event focused on promoting UK-Belgian business and investment just last week.

More broadly, we are busy across the Chamber implementing our new strategic plan. Reflecting the Chamber's overall goals, new horizontal Working Groups on Sustainability and Diversity held their kick-off meetings in the first weeks of the year. On the EU Committee side, we have an unprecedented pipeline of events focused on the new European Commission agenda and the new team of EU policy leaders- watch this space! As always, we encourage you to get actively involved, so if you are interested in taking part in developing our positions e.g. on the UK-EU relationship, contributing to our BTI plan, shaping the agenda of our new Working Groups or simply have suggestions for events, please let us know.

Finally, amongst all this seriousness it is important to keep a light heart and we have a number of fun events that we would like you to already put in your calendar. On April 23rd we will host our Brussels New Generation (BNG) cocktail and then on June 17th we will be hosting our first summer BBQ. More on both events to follow shortly.

Looking forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming activities

Best wishes

Tom Parker | President