

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UK officials will stop attending most EU meetings from 1 September so that they can focus on our future relationship with the EU and other partners around the world.

The Government has decided this week that from 1 September, UK officials and Ministers will now only attend EU meetings where the UK has a significant national interest in the outcome of discussions, such as on security.

This decision reflects the fact that the UK's exit from the EU on 31 October is now very close and many of the discussions in EU meetings will be about the future of the Union after the UK has left.

As the PM has promised in the House of Commons in July, as a departing Member State it makes sense to 'unshackle' officials from these EU meetings to enable them to better focus their talents on our immediate national priorities. This includes, as the top priority, work on preparations for Brexit on 31 October and on our future relationship with the EU, but also on pioneering new trade deals and promoting a truly Global Britain.

This decision is not intended in any way to frustrate the functioning of the EU. The UK's vote will be delegated in a way that does not obstruct the ongoing business of the remaining 27 EU members.

Where matters of ongoing national interest are being discussed, the UK will continue to be present until 31 October.

Further details:

- As a Member State the UK is allowed to send a representative to a variety of EU meetings. These representatives can be Government Ministers or officials.
- The UK has decided that we do not need representation at all of these meetings, especially where the subject is the future of the EU after we have left.
- The UK will continue to attend if and when it is in our interests, with particular regard to meetings on UK exit, sovereignty, international relations, security, or finance and the Prime Minister will attend European Council.
- Decisions will be made on a case by case basis depending on the agendas of the meetings. This provides the right amount of flexibility to ensure UK interests remain protected.

Secretary of State Steve Barclay said:

"An incredible amount of time and effort goes into EU meetings with attendance just the tip of the iceberg. Our diligent, world-class officials also spend many hours preparing for them whether in reading the necessary papers or working on briefings.

"From now on we will only go to the meetings that really matter, reducing attendance by over half and saving hundreds of hours. This will free up time for Ministers and their officials to get on with preparing for our departure on October 31 and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead."