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Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP  
Secretary of State for Exiting the EU  
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13 August 2019

Dear Stephen,

Following comments by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, it has been reported in the media that the UK Government plans to withdraw from a number of EU committees and working groups.

It is clear beyond any doubt that the UK Government should not take a decision on this possible step without proper involvement of the Scottish Government or other devolved administrations. Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the UK Government must involve the devolved governments as fully as possible in discussions about the formulation of the UK's policy position on all EU and international issues which touch on devolved matters. As the MoU establishes, we have a particular interest in those many aspects of European Union business which affect devolved policy.

More broadly, I wish to make absolutely clear that the Scottish Government would object in the strongest possible terms to the removal of the UK from EU working groups and meetings. To take such an approach would be to surrender any ability by the UK to influence EU business – despite the UK still being an EU Member State. This would be at a time when hugely important discussions are taking place and decisions being made, for example on the EU's long term budget, fisheries negotiations and foreign affairs, which will have a significant impact on the UK and on Scotland even in the event that the UK leaves the EU.

The UK Government's pursuit of a no deal Brexit and its determination to leave the EU on October 31 "come what may" is deeply damaging for jobs, living standards and our wider economy and society. Sadly, these latest reports appear to be yet another case of Scotland's interests being ignored during the Brexit process. The UK Government should not take any decision that would affect our ability to have Scotland's legitimate interests fully represented while the UK is still a member state and I am seeking your assurance that no such decision has been made.

I am copying this letter to Mike Russell, the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and the Constitution, Jeremy Miles, Counsel General and Brexit Minister, and David Sterling, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Kind regards  
Fiona Hyslop

**FIONA HYSLOP**