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Department of Trade and Industry



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

The Rt Hon Baroness Symons

of Vernham Dean

Minister of State

International Trade and Investment

Separate copies to:

Jack Straw
Patricia Hewitt

IRAQ: COMMERCIAL ASPECTS

Please refer to the attached submission from

at TPUK.

David Warren and make valid points here and I am concerned that we must address these urgently. More and more individuals and companies are approaching me and TPUK about the issue of post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq. Colin Adams of the BCCB wrote to me only last week expressing "serious concern that insufficient action appears to be happening at a political level to safeguard UK interests when the situation in Iraq is finally normalised". Standard Chartered bank quizzed me at length on this issue today and I hear there is a PQ from Crispin Blunt about what steps the Government is taking to ensure that British companies are able fairly to compete for reconstruction work in post-conflict Iraq. To-date we have been careful not to take a more public stance in support of UK businesses. This has been the right approach bearing in mind that we have been making the case publicly that this is conflict is about WMD not oil (as

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many have unfairly claimed). But the pressure from businesses is building and I fear that some of our business community believe we are not engaged. Some think that the US and France are ahead of the game already; they are particularly exercised about French interests superseding ours; especially since we have been so supportive of the Americans.

I feel strongly that the time is right to be more on the front foot. And that we have contingency planning in place to be sure that British businesses play an active part in any reconstruction. It is also important that British businesses see the British Government actively supporting them and fighting their cause.

I am happy to see the companies involved and TPUK are ready to offer assistance and advice as required, but before I take this forward I would like to be sure that you are both in agreement.

I am copying this letter to Jonathan at No10.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Liz'.

Liz Symons

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