July 2020

Thank you for contacting me about asylum seekers and refugee resettlement.

The UK continues to be one of the world’s leading refugee resettlement states. As a country, we resettle more refugees than any other in Europe and are in the top five countries worldwide. Since 2015, the Government has resettled more than 25,000 vulnerable refugees in need of protection through our refugee resettlement schemes, with around half being children.

Indeed, in the year ending March 2020, over 7,400 refugee family reunion visas were issued to partners and children of those previously granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK. This is 37 per cent more than in the previous year.

The Prime Minister made clear the importance that the Government places on ensuring that unaccompanied children who are seeking international protection in an EU Member State can continue to be reunited with specified family members who are in the UK, as well as children in the UK with family in the EU, following the UK’s exit from the EU.

It is important to note that the UK will continue to reunite unaccompanied children with family members in the UK under the Dublin Regulation during the implementation period, processing and deciding all ‘take back’ requests that have been submitted.

Relevant measures in the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act are primarily about clarifying the role of Government and Parliament in negotiations. It is right that a statutory obligation to negotiate was removed from earlier versions of the Act to ensure the traditional division between Government and Parliament was restored, and the negotiations ahead can be carried out with full flexibility and in an appropriate manner across all policy areas.

A statutory obligation to negotiate with the EU will not itself lead to an agreement. That is not in the gift of the UK Government alone as it requires EU co-operation at a time of complex negotiations. The Act required the Government to lay a statement before Parliament on its policy regarding any future arrangements between the UK and the EU regarding the family reunification for unaccompanied children seeking international protection. You may be reassured to know that the Government made this statement in March and Ministers outlined clearly how the UK believes British withdrawal from the EU does not alter our commitment to this vital issue.

At the first round of the negotiations on the UK-EU future relationship, which also took place in March, our negotiating team outlined the UK’s proposals as published in the document ‘The Future Relationship with the EU – The UK’s Approach to Negotiations’. In that document the Government has clearly stated its commitment to negotiate a reciprocal agreement in this area. The Government has published a draft legal text as a constructive contribution to the negotiations and I understand the EU is now considering the UK’s proposals.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**