

# International agreements

Agreements considered on  
15 December 2025

January 2026



# 1. Background

1. The Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee is responsible for the scrutiny of non-trade international agreements in the sixth Senedd.
2. International agreements signed by the UK Government can cover matters within devolved competence or matters which have important policy implications for Wales.
3. The Committee considers the impact on Wales of international agreements laid in the UK Parliament under the process established by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG Act 2010). It provides an initial 21-day scrutiny period.
4. Our consideration of an international agreement takes into account:
  - whether it engages the Senedd's competence; and/or
  - whether there are potential policy implications for Wales.
5. On 15 December 2025<sup>1</sup>, the Committee considered five international agreements that had recently been laid in the UK Parliament:
  - UK/Bulgaria Termination Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments;
  - UK/Poland Exchange of Notes to terminate Article 13 of the UK-Poland Termination Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments;
  - The Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993;
  - UK/Oman Agreement on the Employment of Spouses of Official Employees; and
  - UK/Portugal Protection of Classified Information.
6. We agreed to note these agreements for information only.

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<sup>1</sup> Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, 15 December 2025

## 2. Agreements noted for information

### **UK-Bulgaria Termination Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments**

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**7.** This international agreement was laid in the UK Parliament on 23 October 2025. Its scrutiny deadline, as required by the CReG Act 2010, was 3 December 2025.

**8.** The objective of the agreement is to terminate the effect of the parties' Bilateral Investment Treaties (BIT). The Agreement contains investment protection provisions that provide investors with commitments on the treatment they can expect to receive with respect to established investments in the other state's territory.

**9.** These provisions seek to protect investors from arbitrary, unfair, and discriminatory treatment, as well as expropriation without compensation. The BIT also contains an Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism providing investors with access to independent arbitration should either state breach their obligations under the treaty.

**10.** The agreement's purpose is to terminate BIT agreements in line with EU commitments while the UK was a Member State. In 2020, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against the UK for failing to do so. Under the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, the Commission may bring proceedings against the UK for up to four years after the end of the Brexit transition period (31 December 2024).

**11.** In December 2023, the UK Government notified the Commission of its intention to terminate its 12 BITs with EU Member States.

**12.** The Explanatory Memorandum contains the same information on devolved engagements as previous similar agreements, stating:

*"The policy content of the Termination Agreement is international investment which relates fully to a reserved matter. However, in view of the fact that the content of the UK-Bulgaria BIT potentially applies to treatment of Bulgarian investments by the Devolved Administrations, and to treatment in the Republic of Bulgaria of investors from the*

*Devolved Administrations, the UK Government has informed the Devolved Administrations of this Termination Agreement”.<sup>2</sup>*

**13.** As the agreements concern international relations, which is a reserved matter as provided by paragraph 99 of Schedule 7A of the Government of Wales Act 2006 (the 2006 Act). The Agreements also concern financial services, including investments, business and banking, which is also a reserved matter under the same provision of the 2006 Act. We therefore agreed to note the agreement for information only.

### **UK-Poland Exchange of Notes to terminate Article 13 of the UK-Poland Termination Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments**

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**14.** This international agreement was laid in the UK Parliament on 23 October 2025. Its scrutiny deadline, as required by the CReG Act 2010, was 3 December 2025.

**15.** As per the previous agreement, the purpose of this agreement is to terminate BIT agreements in line with EU commitments while the UK was a Member State. The same principles around termination apply to this agreement as outlined in paragraph 10.

**16.** Poland unilaterally denounced the UK-Poland BIT on 22 November 2019. However, in accordance with Article 13 of the UK-Poland BIT, the UK-Poland BIT's provisions continued in effect for investments made whilst the BIT was in force for a period of fifteen years after the date of termination. The agreement comprises the notes exchanged by the UK and Poland containing the proposal and acceptance to terminate Article 13's Sunset Clause.

**17.** On devolved engagement, the Explanatory Memorandum contains the same information as per previous similar agreements, stating:

*“The policy content of the Termination Agreement is international investment which relates fully to a reserved matter. However, in view of the fact that the content of the UK-Poland BIT potentially applies to treatment of Polish investments by the Devolved Administrations, and to treatment in the Republic of Poland of investors from the*

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<sup>2</sup> UK Government, Explanatory Memorandum: UK/Bulgaria: Agreement on Termination of Agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments, paragraph 10

*Devolved Administrations, the UK Government has informed the Devolved Administrations of this Termination Agreement”.<sup>3</sup>*

**18.** As the agreement concerns international relations, which is a reserved matter as provided by paragraph 99 of Schedule 7A of the 2006 Act, we agreed to note the agreement for information only.

### **The Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993**

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**19.** This international agreement was laid in the UK Parliament on 11 November 2025. Its scrutiny deadline, as required by the CRaG Act 2010, was 17 December 2025.

**20.** The purpose of the agreement is to implement mandatory global fishing standards. The Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels 1977 was the first international Convention on the safety of fishing vessels, adopted by the International Maritime Organisation.

**21.** The 1993 Protocol updated, amended and absorbed the 1977 Convention. Its purpose was to ease implementation issues identified in the 1977; however, it too led to further implementation issues. As a result, the 2012 Agreement was agreed which made further practical changes to facilitate entry into force and implementation. By 2019, the treaty had not entered into force and the UK joined 47 other states to ensure the entry into force of certain criteria by a target date of 11 October 2022.

**22.** The Explanatory Memorandum<sup>4</sup> explains that the UK already meets the 2012 requirements and did not accede to the 1977 and 1993 for this reason. However, UK accession will assist in meeting the required threshold of states needed to bring about entry into force internationally, and “it is hoped that the UK’s accession will encourage other Member States to do the same.” The number of states has been reached but not the number of eligible vessels (3,600). UK currently has 126 eligible vessels.

**23.** On engagement, the Explanatory Memorandum states:

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<sup>3</sup> UK Government, Explanatory Memorandum: UK/Poland: Exchange of Notes on Termination of Continuing Legal Effects of Article 13 of the Agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments, paragraph 10

<sup>4</sup> UK Government, Explanatory Memorandum: Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provision of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 Relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977

*“The policy content of the 2012 Agreement is fishing safety, which relates fully to a reserved matter, with no implications for the Devolved Administrations, the UK Government has however notified the Devolved Administrations, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories of the intention to accede to the 2012 Agreement. The UK fishing industry will be informed about the accession.”<sup>5</sup>*

**24.** Whilst foreign affairs and international relations is a reserved matter, observing and implementing international agreements in devolved areas is not reserved.

**25.** While fisheries and marine in Welsh waters are not reserved matters, fishing safety is a reserved matter. Furthermore, the agreement applies to vessels operating on the high seas. The technical and safety standards of vessels is a reserved matter as provided by paragraph 120 of Schedule 7A to the 2006 Act. As such, the Committee agreed to note this agreement for information only.

### **UK-Oman Agreement on the Employment of Spouses of Official Employees**

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**26.** This international agreement was laid in the UK Parliament on 13 November 2025. Its scrutiny deadline, as required by the CRaG Act 2010, was 5 January 2026.

**27.** The agreement will support UK diplomatic staff and their dependents and “improve recruitment, retention and staff wellbeing at British Embassy Muscat”<sup>6</sup>. The Explanatory Memorandum explains that spouses of diplomatic staff are unable to work in Oman owing to Omani law.

**28.** The agreement ensures reciprocity for UK diplomatic staff and their dependents in Oman and follows similar agreements between Oman with the USA and Switzerland.

**29.** The Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the agreement states:

*“The policy content of this Treaty is the exempt status of diplomatic dependents, with no implications for the Devolved Administrations, and the UK Government has not consulted*

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<sup>5</sup> UK Government, [Explanatory Memorandum: Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provision of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 Relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977](#), paragraph 10

<sup>6</sup> UK Government, [Explanatory Memorandum: UK/Oman: Agreement concerning the Employment Authorization of Spouses of Official Employees](#), Paragraph 2

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*the Devolved Administrations, Crown Dependencies or the Overseas Territories on the drafting of this Agreement.”<sup>7</sup>*

**30.** This differs from the text of previous similar agreements, which have explained that they relate to foreign affairs and employment policy within the FCDO and the civil service, which relates fully to a reserved matter, but that the UK Government had nonetheless informed the Devolved Administrations.

**31.** This agreement relates to international relations and employment policy within the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the civil service. These are reserved matters, as provided by paragraphs 5 and 10 of Schedule 7A to the 2006 Act. The subject matter of employment is also reserved, subject to limited exceptions.

**32.** This agreement could apply to Welsh Government’s representatives who work within Welsh Government overseas offices that are afforded diplomatic status. However, the Welsh Government does not have its own international office in Oman.

**33.** The Committee therefore agreed to:

- note this agreement for information only;
- note the different approach to consultation with the devolved administrations; and
- monitor similar future agreements which could have implications for Welsh Government overseas office staff.

## **UK-Portugal Protection of Classified Information**

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**34.** This international agreement was laid in the UK Parliament on 1 December 2025. Its scrutiny deadline as required by the CRA Act 2010 is 20 January 2026.

**35.** The agreement provides a legal basis for the protection of classified information exchanged between the UK and Portugal, but does not oblige them to do so. Classified information could include subjects such as defence, law enforcement, counter-terrorism and security.

**36.** The Explanatory Memorandum for the agreement states:

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<sup>7</sup> UK Government, Explanatory Memorandum: UK/Oman: Agreement concerning the Employment Authorization of Spouses of Official Employees, Paragraph 10

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*“The policy content of this Agreement concerns protective security policy, which is a National Security matter. This relates to a reserved matter with no implications for the DAs, and the UK Government has not consulted the DAs on the drafting of this Agreement.”<sup>8</sup>*

**37.** This agreement concerns reserved matters. International relations, which includes relations with territories outside the UK is a reserved matter. This Agreement with Portugal specifically concerns national security which is a reserved matter as provided by paragraph 32 of Schedule 7A to the 2006 Act.

**38.** As such, the Committee agreed to note this agreement for information only.

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<sup>8</sup> UK Government, Explanatory Memorandum: UK/Portugal: Agreement on the Protection of Classified Information, paragraph 10

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