

# Parliamentary Committee Notes That All Treaties Should be Approved by House Of Commons

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Report from our correspondent Richard Curtis, Tax Author

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee of Parliament has [published a report](#) on the scrutiny of international agreements concluding that current arrangements "do not deliver a constitutionally sufficient level of scrutiny".

It was stated in the report that there has been a great increase in the number and scope of international agreements. The committee voiced concern that while such agreements affect people's everyday lives more than before, EU-level scrutiny no longer applies. The result is an unsatisfactory legislative framework and an urgent need for increased Parliamentary scrutiny. All treaties – including tax treaties – should be explicitly approved by the House of Commons and to assist in such reviews, two new committees should be established. A "sifting committee" could assess the level of scrutiny required in the particular circumstances and whether Commons approval is required. A second committee would scrutinize international agreements, similar in nature to the International Agreements Committee in the House of Lords.

The [report](#) calls for an entirely new approach to international negotiations, which would see Parliament involved throughout the entire "lifecycle" of an international agreement, from early considerations and opening negotiations, through negotiation rounds, agreement and ratification, then onwards to implementation and review. Parliament should, for example, be consulted on the setting of negotiating mandates and remain informed of progress throughout negotiations. This new approach would require the government and Parliament to establish new mechanisms for timely and meaningful cooperation. The report also proposes other measures, including a central repository of all non-legally binding instruments and the updating of the Concordat on International Relations.