



Select Committee on International Relations and Defence

Corrected oral evidence: The UK and Sub-Saharan Africa— prosperity, peace and development co-operation

Wednesday 29 January 2020

10.35 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Anelay of St Johns (The Chair); Lord Alton of Liverpool; Baroness Blackstone; Baroness Fall; Lord Grocott; Lord Hannay of Chiswick; Baroness Helic; Lord Purvis of Tweed; Baroness Rawlings; Baroness Smith of Newnham.

Evidence Session No. 2

Heard in Public

Questions 12 – 28

Witnesses

I. Harriet Mathews OBE, Director for Africa, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Jane Edmondson, Director, East and Central Africa Division, Department for International Development.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Harriet Mathews and Jane Edmondson.

Q12 The Chair: Good morning. I formally welcome our witnesses today to our inquiry on the UK's relations with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. I welcome Harriet Mathews, Director of Africa policy at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Jane Edmondson, Director for East and Central Africa at the Department for International Development.

This is our second evidence-taking session of an extended inquiry. It was stimulated by the fact that the UK was regearing its relationship with Africa and had announced that there would be a new Africa strategy. We wanted to find out more about that. We had not seen very much substance in the newspapers and public documents, so this is our opportunity to find out how that is developing. The Government originally made the announcement about a new Africa strategy back in 2018, so we are ready here today to hear some of the detail of how it is being launched.

I will begin with the first question. Since it is on the launch of the strategy and its background, I shall invite first Harriet and then Jane to speak in response. After I have asked the first question, which is a very general and wide one, I shall then turn to my colleagues, who will be ready with more detailed investigative questions. I turn, first, to the wider issue. Whenever a Government announce the launch of a new strategy, the first question has to be: what is it, and why was it considered necessary to have a new one?

Following on from that, how will it be rolled out; who will be responsible for its development, its rolling out and its monitoring; and what kinds of resources will be, and have been, allocated to it, given that clearly this work goes broadly across government, although it is focused on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development? So where are we now, and where are we going?

Harriet Mathews: Thank you very much. It sounds technical but it is worth saying that the word 'strategy' has been used as shorthand, which may be why there has been such consternation about a lack of clear communication. We designed a strategic approach that aimed to provide a framework and guidance for our broader work across the continent, rather than having a traditional document that set out the milestones and the point at which it would be achieved. Underneath it will be a series of strategies.

It aims to focus on issues of long-term mutual interest between the United Kingdom and countries in Africa with a strong focus on mutually beneficial partnerships and working together. You have recognised the cross-government nature of this, and I stress that really strongly. DfID and the Foreign Office are absolutely key partners but BEIS,¹ the DIT,²

¹ The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

² The Department for International Trade

the Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Care and other government departments—eight in all—have been involved in this. That is one reason why we decided that we needed to do things a little differently—to make sure that there really was coherence across government and that we were all working towards the same broad objectives.

The rationale supposes that there has been a growing recognition in the UK, as well as internationally—I know that we will come on to this—of the increasing importance of the continent. Post Brexit, we in the UK will need to make sure that we are clear about our role in the world. In Africa, there is what the *Economist* calls the 'new scramble for Africa', with lots of competitors and others coming in. There are then particular trends on the continent, which is where that framework focuses. There is a big focus on trying to look long term at things such as the demographic impact, and there is a real shift in our approach in thinking about that. There are both the opportunities and the potential challenges of population growth, and the continent that will be most affected by climate change is a low emitter—again, that has an impact on security, stability and the wider economy. On prosperity, there is a need to try to attract long-term sustainable investment in order to create the jobs that the continent needs with those challenges, and there is also a need to try to build security partnerships.

Finally, there is a geographic focus that we are working on. Previously, the UK had not been very involved in the Sahel, although we had had a small embassy there. However, there is now a recognition that, looking at the other four trends that I have talked about, there is an absolute confluence in the Sahel, and we felt that we should and could do more.

I can move on to resource a little now and then come back for questions. It was definitely clear that we needed to make sure that we had the right resource in-country to influence, follow through on delivery and bring about a step change. In the areas I have described, we have increased staffing by 440 across government. That is a mix of local staff and UK-based staff. We have recruited well over 70% of those and about 48%, or just under 50%, of our UK-based staff have now deployed. Those staff are not just in Africa; they are also working in a wider network, trying to understand what other partners are doing. We have them in New York, Paris, Ankara, Cairo, Riyadh and Seoul. It is about seeing a much wider interest and ensuring that we have a better understanding but also collaboration.

Apart from that central resource, departments themselves have put in non-ODA financing. The Foreign Office is supporting the infrastructure, the new building of embassies and the expansion of embassies to support the increased number of staff.

We also set up a small soft power fund, for example, so there is programming that can help support our aims on soft power—in particular, English language training in francophone and lusophone countries, and expanding our Chevening scholarship scheme. We are trying to put in

place practical things that we have been asked for by our African partners. I will stop there, and then answer any more questions.

The Chair: Thank you. Jane, may I turn to you?

Jane Edmondson: I echo that. The strategy is across government, so the same rationales apply across government. On the 'why', I would underline that strong sense that Africa is changing fast. Since about 2000, African GDP has been growing by about 5% a year, and it is estimated to reach some £2.5 trillion by 2025. It is therefore in a very different place from where it has been in the past. So there is a strong message there that we need to look differently. There are other trends, as well; population trends were mentioned. A growing proportion of the world's population will be African over the next 20 to 40 years. There is also the climate risk, which was less well understood 10 or 20 years ago; we understand it a lot better now. Its impact on Africa will be a really important issue. There are also Africa's changing aspirations, and we are making sure that we respond to that. A strong part of the approach is increasing self-sufficiency and helping to support that. I am sure we will come to that issue as the questions proceed.

The Chair: Thank you. May I just follow up on that quickly, and then Lord Hannay would also like to ask a question? Harriet, thank you for describing the way in which the FCO, in particular, is responding to rolling out the new strategy. You referred to a series of strategies. I mentioned earlier that we found it difficult to see public documents on this, so this is our opportunity to ask you about transparency: how do we find out about those? Here, I should declare an interest, in a sense, having been a Minister at the FCO for three years. I was always very keen to see how new staff were recruited and where they magically appeared from, because of the cost to the FCO and the investment in them and their future. You mentioned increasing UK-based staff. Where have they come from, and have they been recruited? Obviously, all this is a resource issue for the Government.

Harriet Mathews: Yes, absolutely. I am very conscious of the communications and that we have been relying previously on the then Prime Minister's statement when she was in Cape Town. We recently submitted written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee in relation to its inquiry. We are also working with the Minister for Africa to look into publishing something, because we are aware of the need to have further information on the strategic approach. I hope to have news on that soon.

In terms of recruitment, it is money that was transferred from ODA to staffing, so it was money that we did not have for staffing. On the funding, that was new slots that did not exist before. Mostly, we have recruited from across government; I think there may be a couple of exceptional ones. For example, the Foreign Office recently increased its recruitment, including through fast stream, to support its various uplifts. So there is a genuine increase in the numbers who have come into government, as well as a wider recruitment across government focusing on specialists.

The Chair: Thank you. Whenever anyone tells us that information will be available soon, you can be sure that we will follow that up with great interest.

Jane Edmondson: It is probably worth clarifying that the increase in staffing is not just in the Foreign Office; it is across several government departments, including DfID. So we have increased our capacity and been recruiting in areas like climate change expertise, economic expertise—

Baroness Blackstone: It is a bit hard to hear you. Can you speak up?

Jane Edmondson: Sorry. We have also been recruiting additional expertise in areas like climate change, economic advice and so forth. We have been recruiting a mixture within government but also, where we needed to bring in increased expertise, we have done some external recruitment.

Harriet Mathews: This has also helped to prioritise the importance of Africa within departments. The additional funding that I talked about has been ODA funding, but departments themselves have also sought to prioritise this work and committed to prioritising it. For example, the resources to upgrade embassies would be Foreign Office resources; that is about prioritising and budgeting for that work.

Q13 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Following up what you said about the increase in your available resources and people in a number of places, I picked up Paris as one. Could you say a word about how our relationship with the French on Africa will be carried forward? Have we, and they, emerged definitively from 100 or 150 years of rivalry into a period of co-operation? Is it patchy, or what?

Harriet Mathews: Certainly in my time in the role, we have had excellent co-operation with the French, and there are some areas where that has been very effective. In process terms—meeting them regularly—we have secondees with the French, who are being very open and are sharing information on the Sahel, for example, where we are trying to establish and grow a presence and our knowledge base. Co-operation ranges from the policy sphere—the big investment of three Chinooks, with crew, to support the French-led Operation Barkhane in the Sahel—right through to shared office spaces in places like Niger.

Inevitably, co-operation is excellent on common interests of peace and security, our role on the Security Council and building capability within our African partners. Clearly, there are trade investment areas where we have some interests, including a more transparent environment, but we are operating independently. Also, there are areas in which we have particular interests in which the French are less interested, so co-operation is thinner. But I have found that on the Sahel, on Sudan, on Cameroon—to a degree on the Horn of Africa—we have had really outstanding co-operation. In other areas, it much more on an informed, and informing, basis, rather than working together on specific projects.

The Chair: Jane, would you like to add anything from the point of view of the Department for International Development?

Jane Edmondson: Similarly, in countries where we both have a presence, there is good co-operation and regular interaction and the sharing of ideas, lessons and so on. More internationally, where we are contributing to global instruments like the Global Fund and Gavi in those kinds of ways, there is also really good co-operation and a good degree of like-mindedness.

The Chair: Thank you. I have further questions but first, I turn to Lord Grocott and then Baroness Blackstone.

Q14 **Lord Grocott:** In your opening remarks you talked about a series of sub-strategies, or words to that effect, which were subject based. That is fine, but Africa is a pretty big place and I frequently wonder about the extent to which you can generalise about a strategy for Africa geographically. Is there any prioritisation on a geographic basis? Are there some parts of the continent on which you are more focused than others—or not?

Harriet Mathews: Absolutely. That is an excellent question. What we have tried to do with the themes that we have talked about is to choose ones that were pretty strong across the continent. Jane is an expert on demography and climate and can talk about that, but the effects were continent-wide, so the demand for jobs and investment to meet that need was cross-continent.

Within that, there are two things that we have done. First, each embassy working together across government has looked at those shifts—the term that we are using—and asked, ‘Which of these are the most relevant here and how are they relevant?’, because in each place, you must tackle it differently and you have a different environment, a different impact or a different culture.

Secondly, all the different shift groups—we will talk about governance and how that works—have come up with a clear set of priorities. For example, it will be no surprise that Nigeria, with the biggest population, with conflict in almost every state, with a big impact on climate and with a requirement to create, I think, 20,000 jobs per week—I will check that—would be one of the top priorities in all those shifts. You can generally see the priorities, which probably happened instinctively or organically before in terms of the shape and size of the embassies. So our really big embassies—our Kenyas, our Nigerias, our South Africas—will be bigger partners and priorities.

Jane Edmondson: It is a good question. It is a very diverse continent, in all sorts of dimensions: levels of poverty, culture, politics and everything else. So while our themes of prosperity, climate, demography and all those things are important in all the countries we work in, the nature of the response to that is very different in different places. It is very different in countries that are experiencing high levels of conflict to countries that are relatively stable and where they are much further

along a path to self-financing their own development and such things. So our responses are framed very much within the context of the countries we are in. I am happy to give examples of what that means in practice, if that is helpful.

Q15 Baroness Blackstone: My question is a bit similar to Lord Grocott's. You said that you were going to expand staffing in Africa and develop some infrastructure in our commissions and embassies. It is a big continent and there are a lot of countries. Then, our interests in some of the countries are actually very small.

Are there are some places where you think we should not be represented and it does not make a lot of sense, given that resources are always scarce? Linked to that, do we, or could we and should we, work more with the French to share information? You mentioned countries where both the UK and France are represented, but what about countries where the French obviously have a long-standing relationship and far more interests, but we have few, and vice versa? Is there a case for doing more work with the French in those sorts of countries, rather than trying to establish a new, small embassy or maintain a very small one?

Harriet Mathews: First, I would be reluctant to say where we absolutely should never be represented in this forum. In the end, it would be a decision for Ministers about how wide they want the network to go. However, we have found that with small countries such as Lesotho and Eswatini, where we are opening at the moment, people might have said, 'There's very low interest. Don't prioritise', but, actually, if you have a small presence—it can be a proportionate presence—the relationships that you form, some of the global challenges, having voices able to speak, having votes, whether they are in the Security Council or not, and business deals grow surprisingly quickly from a small presence.

Baroness Blackstone: Somewhere like Lesotho is stuck in the middle of South Africa. Can you not get the High Commission in South Africa to cover Lesotho?

Harriet Mathews: That would be a possibility. Our experience is that sovereign countries are very proud. The requests we get are for more and more representation and presence. I understand that we need to prioritise but also look at what a small presence, or someone nearby who can respond, can do. Clearly the final decision about where to open is with Ministers, but we already see positive results in those small places.

You asked about co-operation in places where we are not. Without assuming the future, Comoros, for example, has gone through a very difficult patch, with elections and so on. It was quite complicated. The French were absolutely excellent at sharing information. We have good co-operation with other countries, such as Belgium, Germany and France, in places such as Burundi, where we have a limited local presence, and other countries where we are not there, such as Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic. There are other posts where we do not have a presence but which matter because we have UN security troops,

peacekeeping missions or priorities on human rights there. We exchange information regularly.

Jane Edmondson: On the development work, DfID is not present in every country in Africa. There are some countries where the French are much more present than we are, and the other way around. Where we are present together, which is coming more in the Sahel, it is more a question not of competition but of where we can add value and where we bring expertise or other kinds of things that could work alongside the French and in other areas of co-operation. We would work that out, and the same goes for the other way around. Usually, in almost all countries, there will be some development co-operation mechanism, often led by the host government in mapping it out.

The other really important factor is the host government and their own requests for help. They will see that people bring different offers. In Rwanda, for example, the government are very clear that they want certain partners working in certain sectors, be it health, education or whatever. They feel that other partners have a better advantage in other areas. They ask us to focus on efforts in those areas, which is how we work there.

The Chair: Thank you. I turn now to the final question in this subject area before we move on to Lord Hannay's question.

Q16 **Baroness Helic:** Thank you. I also want to declare an interest, as is already recorded. I have two quick questions. The first is for Harriet. In the 'scramble for Africa', how much space is there for human rights, because it is occasionally apparent that the Foreign Office is not as skilful with the balance between trade and human rights as it used to be?

My second question is for Jane. The Global Fund is something that we as a country ought to be proud of. It makes a huge contribution. However, are we confident that funds that go into the Global Fund reach the end user, if you like? Do we have enough oversight? Are we absolutely confident about, between us, committing the funds to the Global Fund and those funds reaching the end user, whether they are TB or HIV or AIDS sufferers, particularly in Africa? How much actually goes to the person we hope to help and whose life we hope to improve?

Harriet Mathews: I slightly disagree with the way you framed it. There are two things. First, I do not think that human rights, prosperity and business are mutually exclusive and that chasing deals is crowding out the other.

Baroness Helic: No, I am sorry.

Harriet Mathews: There are some very real examples of using British companies and legislation around corruption more broadly, as well as on supply chains and child trafficking, which have been helpful in incentivising change. For example, some start-up work in the DRC³ is

³ The Democratic Republic of Congo

looking at supply chains and trying to use the business incentive to bring up wider human rights issues. Secondly, among the UK's unique selling points as a partner and business partner are our liberal, free-trade, wealth-creation reputation and integrity.

That includes a much wider set of values that we bring in. The third is the package around security and development that we bring across the whole of government. It is at the core of how we identify things. Finally, we are working on and prioritising human rights. We have a list of priority countries, but every post I talk to has its priorities. During the Africa Investment Summit last week, we raised particular issues and concerns with particular countries.

There are bigger initiatives, such as the media freedom campaign and initiatives on preventing sexual violence, which are big things that people can get behind, but in our conversations there are also pretty frank debates and discussions with programme support as well. I think it is there, but there has also been feedback that the way to get a better result is not necessarily 'megaphone diplomacy'—at times you need to do that and at other times not.

I was very struck by the invitations to the Africa Investment Summit. There were countries that were not there that might have been in other circumstances, so it is being reflected in our wider engagement and policy as well.

Jane Edmondson: I will answer the question on the Global Fund, but you could apply this answer to other channels of funding as well. It is worth saying that the Global Fund is now a very mature organisation. It was conceived back in the late 1990s, so it has had 20 years to develop its systems for managing its funds, and there has been a lot of learning over that process, so we are confident. It is one thing to have really robust systems for following the money and monitoring it really closely; the Global Fund invests a lot in its systems and in monitoring the systems of partners in-country, including Governments which are delivering that, making sure that there is really strong accountability. That is one thing, but it is also about having strong systems for detecting and acting on fraud if it emerges.

It would be naive to say that we can reduce the risk of fraud to zero—it will always be there, so it is always going to be a matter of managing it, having very low tolerance and making sure that, as soon as any fraud is reported, it is investigated thoroughly and the money recovered. The Global Fund has a good record of doing that. We are confident that it has robust systems and that those things are tracked closely—I would also say the same for other areas of our path funding. It is a mature organisation and has developed some very robust systems.

Harriet Mathews: We have been doing quite a lot of work to make sure that our embassies are aware of all our investment in a country, not just the bilateral programmes, so that they can go to see them, talk about

them and see whether they match our and the country's priorities, giving greater visibility to what is happening.

Q17 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: I would like to turn to the African Union and your assessment of its effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa on economic security and political developments. By saying sub-Saharan Africa, we can take a pass on Western Sahara as it does not fall within the scope of this inquiry. Can you also say whether Agenda 2063 is just a lot of warm words or something that is actually beginning to happen? How well does the African Union work with the sometimes quite impressive subregional organisations in Africa such as ECOWAS,⁴ IGAD,⁵ SADC⁶ and so on? I have a supplementary question to ask afterwards about African operations in the Security Council, but I do not want to mix them up.

Harriet Mathews: I will answer the first question and then turn to Jane for Agenda 2063, then I am happy to come back on the last point. The AU is better equipped and more willing to engage than its predecessor. It is expanding its capability to monitor and manage conflict. To outline what I see as its strengths: it has convening power; it is able to take collective action—we have seen action on peace agreements for Sudan and the Central African Republic, there was a strong response after the unconstitutional transfer of power in Egypt, and it responded with AMISOM in Somalia, bringing troops from the region together and providing support for them at that central level—it has a mandate to speak for African countries, which is really important and powerful, so that we do not have to operate one by one. The trajectory is clearly moving fast and upwards.

In terms of areas where it is trying to reform and recognises that things could move faster or better, it is constrained at the centre in large part by a lack of resource. For example, for a population that is twice the size of the EU's, with almost double the number of countries, it has a core staff of 1,500, or 5% of the EU's staff. It has a much smaller central capability.

A second constraint is implementation: it has very clear ambition, but a lot of the implementation is done by individual countries, some of which is quite patchy. Thirdly—this relates to your last question, I suppose—it is as effective as its members want it to be. There are areas where it has forged ahead very rapidly—I think of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, where there is a long way to go but it has so far been very quick—but there are other areas, for example on space, where it has not made as much progress.

Finally, there is a degree of sensitivity about sovereignty and inviting the AU into a country to resolve problems, which is a constraint in an area where it might be able to offer support. But it is, as I said, definitely moving up.

⁴ The Economic Community of West African States

⁵ The Intergovernmental Authority on Development

⁶ The Southern African Development Community

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Could you answer the question on the subregional organisations?

Harriet Mathews: Of course. You mentioned some of the strong performers. It works really closely with the RECs.⁷ There are eight of them, which vary in capability, membership and focus. The theory is that they provide the building blocks and then the AU comes in later. There are some really good examples of ECOWAS being allowed to lead a whole set of things and resolve regional issues—the Gambia is a recent example, and there are also Liberia and Sierra Leone—a whole set of things—because it is a body with strong regional membership that wants to be activist and has been able to cohere.

There are other areas where the work has been less effective. A recent example is perhaps the elections in the DRC, where SADC and the AU took different positions, which made it very difficult both for the wider international community and for resolution. Things partly depend on the RECs, but there is also a wider problem of wrestling between collaboration and subsidiarity. Some RECs will assert it, others will get on. It is quite a varied picture.

Jane Edmondson: One positive thing about Agenda 2063—a long-term vision—it is that it aligns with the SDGs, which is an important cohering factor. It sets out what the continent's leaders want the continent to look like. It has 20 aspirations within it relating to peace, security and prosperity, inclusive growth and development, and 15 flagship projects. I think the AU itself would say that it is a mixture of here-and-now, practical projects that it can get on with and ones that feel more aspirational, such as a high-speed rail network. They are shorter and longer term. There has already been strong agreement and progress on some shorter-term projects, such as setting up the free trade area and a single air transit market. Others will take longer.

I will give a couple of examples in a moment of progress on the mix. Countries prepared 10-year implementation plans as part of this and are being asked to report on them for the next AU Summit in February. I could probably give you a stronger answer to this question after that. Data is hard to come by on this, which is one of the challenges they face in being able to map that progress.

As one example, one Agenda 2063 target was for all cities on the continent to comply with WHO air-quality standards by 2025. However, as of 2018, only 10 countries were monitoring it in 41 cities and 90% of those cities did not comply. They obviously have a long way to go if they want to reach that target by 2025, but at least there is some impetus in the progress on that. More positively, Agenda 2063 also committed member states to align with a framework for disaster risk reduction by 2023 and 30 countries have adopted, or are implementing, national plans in line with that framework. That is more than double the number doing that in 2013, and a strong sign of useful progress.

⁷ Regional economic communities

It is probably worth adding another regional organisation, which is important in all this and where we have a strong stake and collaboration: the African Development Bank, which is one of the routes by which they will be able to achieve some of these targets. It has five focus areas, otherwise known as the 'High 5s', which relate to energy, integration, industrialisation, feeding—that is, food security—and quality of life. A lot of what is in its strategy aligns very much with Agenda 2063 and will be important, and those two organisations have a close relationship.

Q18 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Could I just ask about African co-operation at the UN and on the Security Council? Given that a rather large amount of the agenda at the Security Council is now on African disputes and issues, you would expect its countries to play an important role. But in my experience, which admittedly is rather long ago, the African habit of giving seats on the Security Council through a 'Buggins' turn' approach saw us, in the middle of the Rwandan genocide, with Rwanda on the Council and Djibouti and Cape Verde, the other members, not being a great deal of help. Has that got any better? I was startled to see that Equatorial Guinea is now on the Security Council—a country not known for its lack of corruption or respect for human rights, or indeed influence on any matter outside Equatorial Guinea, other than in the enrichment of its leaders. Are they not rather held back by this? Latin America and Asia do not do it that way; they put their large countries on the Security Council more often than the very small ones. The Africans seem to be unable to break out of that. Is that a handicap?

Harriet Mathews: The selection of members of the Security Council varies. There is now a stronger lobbying campaign from some of the big countries to come on to it more often and more frequently, but the selection process also tries to manage fairness. One of the biggest impacts, which you alluded to, is the capacity of a country on the Security Council to handle the vast workload that would result. Niger is coming on to the Security Council, and we will engage with it, for example, to try to help on capacity. We will offer to navigate the systems, but it is also about making sure it is aware of where we can provide wider support as well. I am sure that if it was only the really big countries, there might be more capacity. But the continent would obviously not feel that that was representative, so there is a balance going on there.

In terms of co-ordinating common positions on the Security Council, they do not always achieve that but we find that the council's members from the continent speak to each other and try to come to common positions on the areas where we are involved. They are engaged with the AU as well. Interestingly, in the AU there are the beginnings of looking at wider common positions—not just on peace and security but, for example, on issues such as family planning. It is incipient, but there is the sense of a trend there.

Q19 Lord Purvis of Tweed: My question relates to the interaction with our relationship with the AU, which we have just discussed, and then the wider African strategy. I want to preface it with a point that the Chair

made. I am on the Gov.uk website at the moment, on the page headed 'UK's partnerships with Africa'. There is some narrative on the five areas you mentioned. The latest news is from October, which was of a Minister's speech at the FT summit. There is a statement saying that the UK-Africa Investment Summit will be happening in January, but there is nothing about it. The third point is about UK aid-funded mine clearance—a very important issue, but it reinforces the point that anyone going on to the UK Government's portal would not get the impression of what you said.

Going on to my question, I read the submission to the Foreign Affairs Committee. I was rather surprised that there was no mention of the Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union in it, and I wondered why. The statement also said that the new approach, 'As a package', will provide 'a more modern, innovative and exciting UK offer to African countries'. What would some examples of this new offer be, compared to, say, in 2017? Why was the African Union Memorandum not mentioned in the statement and what is the interaction between the strategy and our specific MoU with the AU?

Harriet Mathews: Those are good, challenging questions. I will take the first point, about making sure that Gov.uk is up to date, away with me. I have taken that point very clearly. The Memorandum of Understanding with the AU was born out of the strategy. It is one of its results, where we recognised that we needed to do more to formalise in particular with the AU how it wished to engage; then to take what we had as our shift priorities, in areas where we could help it, and look at where its priorities were to see where they matched. It may be an oversight but it may not have come through because it was a product of it, rather than a cause. I will review that as well and make sure that I shift it.

You asked what we could do that was more exciting. Underpinning our shifts, we have been working hard to think about soft power, to look at youth in particular and at technology. Those are the sorts of areas where we probably have not done enough. An example of where we have been working with the AU, using a soft power fund and across different departments, is by having a convention that brings young people together at the AU on climate change. They are able to convene with each other and enhance their voice, but also to talk with leaders. That is something that I do not think we would have done and which was led much more by youth.

Another area under security that we have been looking at is global health security. The AU has obviously been looking at the Ebola outbreaks—the previous one in west Africa and now—and wants to work with us on modelling its own disease control prevention or, at least, early warning. We have been working with it on that and seconding to it. It is an area where we probably would not have done this before, but because we have defined it and they have, it is a new area of co-operation. That may not be exciting enough.

Jane Edmondson: One area where we have a strong common interest is demographic trends. Africa is currently going through a big demographic transition. It could potentially reap a massive benefit from that; it could also be hugely challenging in terms of needing to deliver services for an increasing number of people. Back in 2017, the African Union worked with its member states to develop national demographic road maps which laid out analysis of some of the trends and thinking on how they can plan for their future populations as well as their current populations.

Some quite good-quality plans were developed, but then what? That is a strong area and an important part of our approach, a lot of which is about investing in human development, education, health and jobs. We are working with the African Union, including providing some extra expertise, to see how we might work with some of those countries to make those things real. That is potentially transformational if those plans have some teeth.

Lord Purvis of Tweed: I have a follow-up question, but I will be fair. The memo referred to technical assistance to the AU in some areas, which is welcome, and assisting in its capacity, which is also welcome. If you have any further information on what is now being done, or can be done, as a result of this MoU or the new strategy which was not able to be done before, that would be very helpful. There is one element of just increasing what you are able to do by extra resource; there is a separate category of different types of things that you are able to do because it is a different type of relationship.

My follow-up question is linked with what had been due to be a high-level dialogue in November. Unless it happens imminently, it seems that the AU Summit will be before our high-level dialogue, which is disappointing. Do you have any latest information on when the high-level dialogue is likely to happen? Is that dialogue happening within a similar format and structure to that of some of our other dialogues with other international organisations, or is the framework and type of dialogue that will happen with the AU unique?

Harriet Mathews: At the moment, we are in discussions with Chairperson Faki about dates and are trying to organise those; it will indeed be after the summit given all our commitments. Chairperson Faki came last week to the UK-Africa Investment Summit and had some excellent discussions with the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and other members of the Government. Those covered a range of issues, including specific geographical interests and priorities but also climate change and the African Continental Free Trade Area. One of the areas where we could not have operated in the way we were before is the African Continental Free Trade Area, because we would have been going and saying, 'This is what we want', while in this circumstance it is the continent saying, 'This is what we want to design and what we want to do. Please can you help by giving us some people, and please can we talk to you about what our priority countries are,' so that we come in behind that. So, it feels different.

In the dialogue itself, there are some similarities and some differences. There is a similar formal element in terms of Chairperson Faki leading a delegation and a plan to revolve between London and Addis. In terms of subject matter, we are trying to work on those five shifts. Until we have had a discussion, we need to see where new areas are and which areas really work. I am not sure that there will be an even focus on all of them at the end of it, because we need to get into that level of discussion. The main thing for me is making sure that it leads to practical transformational activity and not just words of good will and intent.

Jane Edmondson: I am not sure there is a huge amount to add. Clearly, if we get together for a summit, there will be lots of things we can increase the pace and momentum on. That is what we would aim to do.

Harriet Mathews: I stress that it is cross-government, so it would look at a full range of issues, from illegal migration through to climate and specific geographic country issues. We really are talking about the whole of government coming in for these talks.

The Chair: Thank you. I remind all of us that this room is not the easiest for the acoustics. Although we have microphones, unless you are speaking directly at them, it is quite difficult for people to pick it up. The microphones are wonderful for those who may be watching on the television, but they do not particularly assist us.

Q20 **Baroness Fall:** Welcome. We have a growing narrative that we need to move beyond aid and focus more on conflict and trade issues. To what extent is that driving new policy in both your departments and the Government, and has that affected more traditional development policy?

Focusing on the free trade aspect of the AU, you said that the pan-Africa free trade area was going great guns, but I wanted to hear a little more about your assessment of that. Do you think there is a conflict between the regional economic communities, some of which seem to be doing incredibly well and becoming quite powerful forces on their own, and moving some of them towards monetary union? Are they really going to break those down and create one big one, or are we going to see pockets emerge?

Jane Edmondson: That is a very good question. I shall start with the broader 'beyond aid: trade and security' issue. Trade preceded aid, so there has always been trade and it will be there long after as well. We have always had a relationship between those two things, but it has definitely evolved over time. Africa is changing; African countries are, with some exceptions, getting wealthier, and that obviously places a stronger emphasis on that route to self-financing, so we are definitely working very differently from 10 or 20 years ago and we would expect to be working very differently in 10 to 20 years' time.

In terms of the way that has changed, this is the new approach to Africa and some of the additional posts have really helped here. It is about making sure that we can play on our relative strengths and bring the different parts of government together. It is not so much an either/or

between aid and trade as about how those two things come together to meet what countries need.

An example is the fact that while Africa is getting wealthier and has good growth in many places, there are still many brakes and constraints on that growth; there are still many brakes and constraints on trade. Although trade is massively increasing and total UK trade with Africa has more than doubled since 2000, within African trade there are still big issues around infrastructure and regulation. There is definitely a role for development assistance to support that trade and make sure that the benefits are seen throughout country populations, as well as supporting other things. We do a lot of work around ease of doing business. Our trade colleagues can then come in on the back of that in terms of UK investments and trade opportunities. It is also about addressing infrastructure issues that get in the way; for example, some of the regional trade facilitation support that we can provide. Development assistance is about, for example, strengthening customs systems at borders, making them more streamlined, making the passage of goods and services easier, and working with countries to improve their ease-of-doing-business indicators so that investors have more confidence in coming behind those.

Another side of it is making sure that, at the same time as they are getting wealthier and doing more trade, legitimate taxes and revenue are raised. We have a very strong UK offer: the combination of our development and trade expertise, alongside instruments for export finance and other such things, comes together in a way that works better. That is the bit that has changed a lot; things are much more joined together than they used to be. It is helped also by the ability to increase capacity and international trade in-country, so that what we are doing can be better exploited, benefiting the country but also enabling UK interests alongside that.

You had another question about the free trade aspect and conflict with regional groupings. It comes back a little to the point about Africa being a massively diverse and huge continent. It is inevitable that countries that are near neighbours and have been trading for centuries will develop close links and will perhaps be able to move and reach agreement on some of these things faster than when negotiating across a whole continent.

I cannot predict the future, but I think that this will be an evolutionary thing; as the advantages of doing things are seen more clearly they will want to spread those out, but that is a very long agenda.

Harriet Mathews: On the continental free trade area, the sign-up initially was 54 member countries—only Eritrea did not sign up—and there has been quite a fast process of ratification. Ghana has been chosen for its headquarters so, in one sense, that is stating ambition very fast.

But you are absolutely right about the challenges. There are two particular very sensitive areas that need negotiation—one is rules of origin and the other is tariff schedules—which will slow down progress. To look at the missed opportunity for intra-African trade, the percentage of trade within Africa is much lower than it should be. Hopefully, this will be something that drives industrialisation and jobs, because intra-African trade is less focused on extractives and much more on the wider value-add and agricultural products.

Q21 Baroness Rawlings: Last week, the Government hosted the UK-Africa Investment Summit, which was reported as being successful. Can you clarify the purpose of the Summit and some of the concrete outcomes? I do not remember reading about things like the BMCE⁸ agreement. The BMCE has 560 branches all over Africa and works very closely with us, with the CDC. Just last year we had a £200 million agreement. Can you also mention the green economy, which is so important?

Harriet Mathews: I have a government statement that we produced, which has quite a long list of tangible outcomes under the different headings and priorities, which I am very happy to share with the Committee. There were four stated intents for the Summit: first, increasing trade between the UK and Africa; secondly, helping African countries to transform their economies, building prosperity; thirdly, mobilising sustainable finance for the continent; and, fourthly, supporting clean energy potential on the continent. The Prime Minister met all the Heads of State and Heads of Government; 16 of the 21 attended. They also engaged with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, who hosted a reception on behalf of the Queen. We also had cross-government Secretary of State-level engagement on a set of bilateral priorities as well as the Africa investment ones.

To highlight a few of the themes, there were new partnerships between Africa and the City of London. These included listings of Kenyan and Rwandan local currency bonds on the London Stock Exchange. We had a £1.5 billion World Bank sterling bond, which will be used to finance high-impact projects through the International Development Association. We also announced £1.5 billion of UK aid-funded initiatives, which are aimed at mobilising a further £2.4 billion of additional private investment for the continent, so quite a big series of government projects. Regarding commercial deals at the time, our assessment is that there were about £6.5 billion of deals at the UK-Africa Investment Summit, which it helped either to bring over the line or bring forward. We have also recorded about £8 billion of investment commitments for the longer term.

So, it was partly about having an event and fast-tracking things, but also about having a series of initiatives to take things forward. On the bilateral side, to name a few specific countries, we announced a strategic partnership with Kenya to bring together our co-operation under particular streams of work, enhancing that co-operation and hopefully making sure we can be more effective. With Morocco, we have signed

⁸ The Moroccan Bank of Foreign Commerce

MoUs to enhance investment opportunities in the renewable, education and other sectors. There were quite a few specific agreements with individual countries. I will let Jane speak for a moment, but I have a statement here that takes each of the headings and gives a much more detailed list of the deliverables and achievements.

Jane Edmondson: A lot of the detail is there, but a huge number of partnerships were facilitated through the Summit. It was a great opportunity to bring different groups together. For example, as is covered a little in the statement, we had a side event on green energy, which brought together a powerful combination of country governments—there is a huge appetite across a range of governments to do more on green energy—along with financiers, who are interested in investing and see the long-term potential, and entrepreneurs who are developing, implementing, and scaling up new technologies in Africa. A number of country plans came out of that, so there is a lot going on.

We also announced an infrastructure commission, which is about making sure that we can double and redouble our investments by attracting private finance into infrastructure projects in Africa. We agreed partnerships on this with a number of African countries. Again, this is covered in the statement. I hope you will find that that is a reasonably comprehensive account of what has come out the other side. Some of these will be threads that we will work through into the COP 26 Summit⁹ later in the year.

Baroness Rawlings: On one tiny point, which countries are involved in the £1.5 billion initiatives? Sub-Saharan Africa is very large.

Harriet Mathews: Some of the initiatives are cross-continent and some are for specific countries. For example, there is a digital access programme that targets Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, but another programme that will support UK and African businesses to invest across the continent and is open to businesses from any country at all.

Q22 Lord Alton of Liverpool: You have said a lot and it is encouraging to hear what you said about trade and investment—and you have been relaying some good stories to us—but can I move you on to security and violence? Would you agree that the basic proposition is that, unless you tackle those things, you will not allow the climate to change in such ways as to be able to let investment and trade thrive?

By way of example, take a country such as Sudan, where 2 million people were killed during the depredations of Omar al-Bashir, or think of Darfur, all of which happened on the basis of imposed ideology. We have not heard the word 'ideology' in the proceedings so far, but it is present across the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, whether with al-Shabaab in Somalia, or in Nigeria—Harriet, you said that there is violence in virtually every state there.

Think back just to Christmas Day, when 11 people were executed by

⁹ The 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference

beheading, or the Chibok girls and the violence against women, and the story of Leah Sharibu in Nigeria, which was recorded only last weekend. Think of the youngsters in the dormitory, in Nigeria, who were all executed by Boko Haram, which means 'destroy or eradicate Western education'. Where does that leave our development programmes—Nigeria is the biggest recipient of aid in Africa—and where does that lead to regarding our policies on security and trying to tackle issues around violence?

Harriet Mathews: One of the shifts I described was absolutely around security. One of the things I am trying to do through a cross-government fund, on which I am the Senior Responsible Officer and chair a group, is to try hard to look at the earlier stages of conflict rather than just the result at the end, because that costs the most in terms of human lives and impact, as well as financially. For example, we are working with the AU to look at increasing mediation, and trying to find techniques to come in earlier.

However, we have different stats from different organisations, including our own analysis, and it is clear that most—around two-thirds—of fragile states in the world are in Africa. In our own assessment, an increasing number of countries have come into that category, such as Malawi, which we would not have put on that list a few years ago. I can talk through some of our particular priorities there, or maybe come back to them if you want to talk about specifics.

We are also trying to build up African capability. We spoke about mediation, but on the African Union's response in Somalia, we are looking at training and improving peacekeeping capability. For example, we trained Malawian peacekeepers who have gone to the DRC, which is a way of training them not only to be more effective but to look at the wider human rights and international humanitarian law operation in Malawi as well.

On security, we are going right back to the beginning on the causes, through to mediation and early intervention, and then look at the different means of peacekeeping and resolution as you go down. There is obviously another humanitarian dimension at the end, which is problematic.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: Your basic point is that we should be doing more to try to prevent this in countries such as Burundi, for instance, where many say there is an impending genocide—Lord Hannay referred earlier on to the 1 million people who died in Rwanda during the genocide there and our failure to act or to prevent that—and there are warnings about Cameroon. The Nigerian National Assembly itself said that it thinks that the country faces genocide. As signatories to the Genocide Convention, which says that we have a duty to prevent, protect and then to punish those responsible, what more are we doing to push that up the agenda? I asked you specifically about the role of ideology in this. We tiptoe around that issue, but should we not be addressing it more carefully? We had President Buhari here last week for the summit that

Lady Rawlings just referred to; did we ask him specifically about these events? His chief of staff was in this very room for a private meeting last week, and they were in a complete state of denial.

Harriet Mathews: I will say two things and will then talk about Nigeria specifically. Across the continent, there are more fragile countries, but the type of conflict seems to be changing and, with one really big exception, the numbers of casualties have gone down significantly. That big exception is the Sahel. I have a really big concern about the rate of deterioration in Burkina Faso, which Lord Hannay mentioned, as well as Mali more broadly and the wider region. That is one of the reasons why we are having this big shift to be involved, to boost our development programme and to try to target it at flash points.

On ideology specifically, it is absolutely vital to support and encourage countries that are approaching things in the right way. We have been doing quite a lot of work with Kenya, for example, on countering violent extremism—we have some interesting projects there, which also link in with our wide development work and the wider environment. We are exploring what more we can do in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

I went to Nigeria—I go there regularly—and I also saw the President's chief of staff. Clearly, there is a strong religious dimension, but the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja and other religious leaders were also talking about some of the other factors that play in. I am not talking about the ideology—the impact of the religious element. There are other reasons which exacerbate it, such as questions about identity which come from population movements, with people coming into new areas, whether because of land use, or traditional farmers. The religious dimension is important, but there are many other layers, which are linked to farmer-herder conflicts, identities, and people coming into an area. That ties in with our really needing to understand these localised elements of a conflict, as well as being absolutely clear about what is and is not right.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: If I may ask a supplementary question, what do we then do when it happens? Many of us saw MONUSCO in operation in the context of the DRC, and in the context of Sudan we saw peacekeepers carrying out terrible violations against local communities and especially women. What more are we doing to train the peacekeepers when these situations arise?

Harriet Mathews: We are doing a lot of preventive work to train peacekeepers before they deploy. First, on peacekeepers—it is a bit stronger than that in the form of UNOSOM in Somalia, or, as I said, Malawi in the DRC, and we have been training other standby forces—we have put protection of civilians, and in particular a focus on gender and gender sensitivity, at the heart of what we have been doing in our training. We have made sure that both the legal requirement and the practice is absolutely clear, and we want to do more on that. More broadly, we are pursuing a wider reform programme with the UN as well to make sure that that comes through all the missions, so that when we deploy to Mali it is not just about what our peacekeepers are doing but

about who we work with, the culture we have and how we take that forward.

The Chair: Jane, I know that Lord Hannay has a supplementary, but I will turn to you first.

Jane Edmondson: Briefly, it is worth mentioning that Harriet's area of responsibility on this leads across government—DfID and a number of government departments feed into that, so we are addressing this from all the angles. Clearly there are diplomatic, development and defence tracks, and so on, so we try to make sure that, country by country, we are bringing all that together.

On the development angle on this, that is regarding the root causes of conflict in the longer term, both very downstream and upstream, and the drivers of that. We talked earlier about the UK-Africa Investment Summit, but much of what came out of that is that large parts of Africa are not in a position to benefit from those kinds of investments now because of conflict. Looking at those drivers of conflict therefore remains a really important part of our business.

That is in everybody's national interest, including the UK's, so we look very much at those kinds of things. They include vulnerability to ideology and the things that drive it, which will be very context specific. Evidence about what works is important and we are constantly trying to make sure that we build evidence back into what we do on that and make sure that we have got context-specific information because it is very different in different places. For the most fragile countries we work in, such as South Sudan, parts of Nigeria and that kind of thing, that is very much the framing of what we do.

At the other end, where there is active conflict, there is the humanitarian side and, again, similarly to what we were talking about in terms of the UN, it is making sure that the whole approach is, at the very least, doing no harm and, at best, is also part of the solution on managing the drivers.

The Chair: Thank you. I am going to talk about that. Lord Hannay, you have a supplementary?

Q23 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: To what extent are we inhibited in expanding our involvement in these areas of security and the ones you have been talking about, which I agree are high priority because you cannot do much development in countries which are in that state of fragility? How much are we inhibited by DAC¹⁰ rules? To what extent are we inhibited from providing the resources—because, of course, the 0.7% GNI provides a large amount of resource? To what extent do the DAC rules inhibit us? Would we like to see them changed? If so, are we doing anything about it? Does the UN want to see them changed, too, because the emphasis of the UN Secretary-General on prevention is laudable? Perhaps you could

¹⁰ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee

comment on that issue?

The Chair: Jane, perhaps you would like to start on that. Specifically, it links back to an earlier question about resources.

Jane Edmondson: This may be a question more for Ministers than for officials. There is a lot we can do within DAC rules to support peacekeeping and good practice around this, but there are limits to what we can do. However, they are not the only resources that we can bring to bear so, as much as possible, this is why this part of our approach on peace and security is to make sure that we are taking what we can do within ODA and what we can do with other parts of the government machinery and bringing that to bear as much as we can.

Harriet Mathews: The Prime Minister has made it clear that he thinks there is more we can do to bring greater coherence to the overseas offer. In terms of DAC rules, as Jane says, there are areas where it clearly is not allowed and so we have non-DAC funding. The CSSF—the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund—is a mix of ODA and non-ODA. However, there are limitations. If you want to train militaries, that is an expensive job, but it may not be what we think is the answer.

The Chair: Thank you. I now turn to Baroness Smith to ask the next question, but I make the point too that we are now reaching the end of the original scheduled time for taking evidence. I am grateful to our witnesses for making a little extra time available in their diaries, having seen the lengthy and complicated questions we have in front of us. At this point, I will come to a conclusion quickly to say that we have three questions left.

Q24 **Baroness Smith of Newnham:** My question follows on, in some ways, from those of both Baroness Rawlings and Lord Alton. Baroness Rawlings mentioned questions of green issues. My formal question is to ask what assessment the Government have made about climate change questions in Africa, but I would like to press you more broadly in terms of not only the climate science and questions of whether we are looking at certification, flooding and so on but also on some of the wider issues that could emerge in terms of both movements of people and security questions. So it brings back some of the security questions as well as climate issues. Secondly, what is the UK doing to work with African countries, particularly in the context of the 2018 strategy talking about using science, innovation and technology? That would seem to be one way in which we could make a difference.

Jane Edmondson: That is a huge question and in the interests of time I will try to answer it as concisely as I can.

Clearly, climate change will have a massive impact—it certainly will have a potentially massive impact in the future—on Africa. It is the continent set to be the worst affected by the consequences of climate change, but it is responsible for only 2% to 3% of global emissions. I will talk a bit about our activity in Africa, but clearly an important part of that is Africa's voice on the international stage and the action that needs to

happen outside Africa to mitigate that. I will not go into the detail of all that—just to make that point.

There are two sides. We are already seeing and modelling—I will come back to some of the research in a moment—the impacts of increasingly less predictable weather patterns, droughts and floods. There are different impacts in different places. We saw an unhappy example with the cyclone last year in Mozambique, its impacts and what that says about the country's coastal defences, wetlands and so on. Some of the support we are providing post-cyclone is how to make the country more resilient to cyclones in a way that other countries have achieved. For example, Bangladesh these days can manage, largely without international help because it has built a level of resilience, although it is still vulnerable. So we are thinking about the ways in which we can build that kind of resilience.

There are those impacts, but there is also an acceptance that we need lots more data, lots more modelling and lots more evidence, so part of our response—I will come on to some of the activity—is about more research. That is at two levels: one is about improving our understanding of weather and climate events and what is happening and helping countries improve their ability to collect, model and predict things so that they can adapt ahead of time—to strengthen the capacity at a country level to do that. We have a good UK offer on that, and the Met Office and others are part of that offer. There is a Future Climate for Africa programme, which aims to generate more fundamental new climate research in partnership with African institutions and to ensure that that science has an impact across the continent. That is one part of it.

On the other side, I should say that, just as Harriet leads on the security angles across government, I have that role on climate change with a colleague from BEIS, so it is very much a cross-government thing. We work with other government departments such as Defra and others on this because we have different relative strengths in that area. Just one example is a new Africa climate programme. It is a large, cross-Africa programme in which we will be investing a lot. From the DfID side, that is a lot on adaptation to climate change, and BEIS focuses a lot more on the mitigation angle and the big picture around emissions. We have already talked about green energy, which is also a big part of the piece.

There is a huge amount going on. I could speak for a lot longer, but I probably ought to pause given the pressures of time. If I have not answered any of your questions, let us know and we will do our best to answer them.

Harriet Mathews: Very briefly, ahead of COP 26 there is a huge opportunity for us to engage diplomatically, to listen and to really understand what the specific priorities and concerns are. You have alluded to population movement and conflict as a consequence, but there is a whole set of potential knock-on impacts around agricultural land use and urbanisation which we are just exploring, and the scientific community, including the Royal Society, has been really engaged in

trying to look at things from very different angles. However, our conclusion was that the biggest problem was data, which Jane has alluded to.

Jane Edmondson: There are also some trends that provide opportunities. You mentioned the migration angle. There is the risk of migration out of Africa, but there is also a lot of migration going on within Africa and increasing urbanisation at the moment, which potentially presents some risks, but also some huge opportunities. The urbanisation trend is an opportunity to preserve the environment and the inner cities, so some of what we are doing, including with partners such as the African Development Bank, is to think around those issues as well.

The Chair: Thank you for reminding us of the international activity around climate change. We are going to go even further than that.

Q25 **Baroness Blackstone:** Can you tell us a bit about the other countries from outside Africa that are big players in Africa, both diplomatically and in development aid, and say something about how we work with them?

Harriet Mathews: Of course. There is a long list. Before I focus down, just to say that there is a series of countries—such as Norway, Sweden and even the Czech Republic—that really focus on one or two countries and know them well. We have a kind of variable geometry, where we work with Norway on Sudan and South Sudan and with Sweden on Somalia; the Czech Republic and Spain have a particular focus in the Sahel. I say that first, because I will not mention everyone.

I know there is a separate conversation about China, which has the biggest presence at the moment and has really changed the situation. We are having conversations with the Chinese about Africa. We have met their Africa leads here and we intend to go to China—there were some talks a couple of years ago—to work more closely.

The United States has the biggest diplomatic network in sub-Saharan Africa, with 51 posts in total. There has been a bit of a decline in its focus on Africa. It has cut its aid funding by about 29% but is still the biggest donor and is very influential on the political, military and development sides. I have regular co-ordination meetings—once a month—with my opposite number in the State Department and with other parts of the system. I travel over there and engage regularly on co-ordination.

In Europe, we have spoken about France already and our regular co-operation and co-ordination, so I will not repeat what I said. Germany is really interesting: it is rapidly expanding what it is doing and its aid programme. Again, our co-operation is very close indeed. For example, our analysts will meet tomorrow in London, and they have a regular exchange. Next month, I will be in Berlin to have wider talks on Africa, so it is a very close relationship indeed.

Then there are some new players, or players that have been there. It is worth talking about the Gulf and Turkey, where we have seen a really large investment, in particular in the Horn of Africa and east Africa. We

are increasingly seeing economic and political influence there and, interestingly, that also presents some opportunities. We created an envoy role for someone who would focus on the Gulf and Turkey and try to bridge the Africa-Gulf connection, because we had not really operated across geographies. That has been really interesting and has succeeded in bringing about progress on the Sudan peace deal, bringing together the Americans and key Gulf countries. It also has real potential around finance and making sure that we are aligning our interests. There is increasingly close co-operation and results.

More broadly, a lot of countries are showing an interest. In Europe in the last year, Spain, Ireland—just last week—and Italy have published strategies. I have regular conversations with those bilateral partners. Brazil is definitely making a big shift. I was posted there before and am interested in engaging. We have quite different arrangements with them all. For example, our Permanent Secretary travelled with the Irish Permanent Secretary to Mozambique a couple of weeks ago. We are trying to find new ways of co-operating and engaging.

I have not mentioned Russia yet; Russia is engaging differently. Its trade with Africa has risen significantly. It sold twice as much weaponry to African countries in 2017 as in 2012. It had an event—the first Russia-Africa summit—which brought leaders to Sochi in October last year. We are seeing a very clear shift in focus from Russia at the moment.

Baroness Blackstone: May I press you on China? You said we are talking to China. What are we talking about? What kind of messages are we conveying?

Harriet Mathews: We diplomats! It is really important. Chinese-African trade is over \$200 billion, its FDI is more than \$30 billion and Chinese state banks are the largest external source of infrastructure finance. It is creating jobs. In the last couple of years, it has created over 30,000 jobs; it is a larger creator of jobs than any other external player. It naturally has a very strong influence and interest in individual countries, as well as broader themes.

China is, for example, the largest foreign direct investor in Ethiopia and is estimated to hold about half of Ethiopia's external debt. China is also the largest P5 contributor to UN peacekeeping, which is increasingly confluent with its interests. What are we talking about? Quite a lot of things: we are on the Security Council together and there are some specific country situations where we are trying to get agreement on common positions. For example, on Somalia, we have had a good relationship with China and Russia in maintaining unanimity; that has been a really important conversation.

Secondly, there are some really interesting opportunities for British businesses. With this level of investment—getting the sort of investment and infrastructure necessary for the continent—there are also opportunities for British companies. For example, in South Africa and Kenya, there has been engagement to look at where there could be joint

bids where there is quality assurance, and at some of the services that the UK could provide to make sure that engagement or deals are transparent and legally sound and have the quality assurance or insurance. Companies are making some interesting connections there, which we are interested in as well.

We are also talking about broader themes, whether it is climate change or a more open and transparent business environment. We are increasingly talking about debt in Africa, the consequences of that and what needs to happen next. There is a broad range of discussions, from country-specific to thematic.

Jane Edmondson: In the interests of time, clearly on the development side, in terms of official ODA they are not one of the biggest players, although they are increasing. There are some areas where there is some benefit to be had from working together. One of the most enduring areas of our work with them is global health security and health generally.

There are two sides to that. The global health security side is in their interest. It is a very live topic at the moment, but it has also been live across the year on Ebola. They have a lot of expertise in these kinds of areas as well. There are times when they can be helpful in those areas, and we try to work with them there.

There is also the question of what African countries can learn from China's experience of managing its own health system and delivering health services, for example, to a growing population. It has borrowed ideas from all over the world to try to find something that will work for them. That is quite an interesting lesson for other countries. There is some partnering on that too. There are areas where we have common interests and objectives and we can work together.

Q26 **Lord Grocott:** I am sorry, this could be quite a big question. I will keep it as short as I can. What impact will there be on our development programme when we leave the EU, which is not far away now? My factual question is: what proportion of our aid is directed through the EU at present? Last time I checked it was quite a big proportion, but I do not have an up-to-date figure. If you do not have that now, perhaps you could let us have it.

I would like to know whether there is any understanding within DfID as to the benefits, or otherwise, of aid being directed from the UK Government to the EU and then presumably to where it is intended to go. Instincts suggest that another level of bureaucracy will not necessarily be to everyone's advantage.

I wonder about the capacity for redirecting our aid development programme when we do it ourselves, presumably via our embassies to a degree, particularly since a lot of development programmes are quite small—mine clearance programmes are hugely important, but are relatively small. Again, I never quite see the advantage of putting aid into an EU pool and then out again as opposed to a direct, bilateral relationship.

I am sorry that there are so many questions here. Finally, as I understand it, a lot of the European Union External Action Service— what it does in some of the outposts has always slightly puzzled me—is to do with supervision of development that comes from the European Union budget. The EEAS offices will no longer deal with our aid programme, I assume, so am I right in assuming that more and more work will go to the individual embassies to look at these things?

The Chair: You have certainly delivered a bazooka.

Lord Grocott: There is a lot there, I admit.

The Chairman: I ought to add that I am aware that many of the answers to that should be coming from politicians. I appreciate that you might have to narrow down some of your answers.

Jane Edmondson: I will tell you what I can and cannot say. To make sure I give you the right figure, I will come back on the precise investment to date. Under the withdrawal agreement there is agreement on areas where we will continue to honour commitments that have already been made over a period, with that declining over time. That is already in the withdrawal agreement.

Beyond that, how any money that we have funded through the EU in the past will be rechannelled, and whether there are any areas where we might still work in partnership with it, if that makes sense, will be a ministerial decision based on what makes sense in terms of value for money. I cannot answer that at the moment.

Lord Grocott: I will not ask anything else, but can you at least say whether it would be DfID's decision that the best way to deal with, for example, a mine clearing scheme somewhere would be to contribute to a European pot and get it via that, as opposed to the direct relationship that could presumably be established between the UK and the recipient country.

Jane Edmondson: If that is an issue that we would want to support, the channel we would use would be a DfID decision. It would be for our Ministers to decide, if I understand your question right.

The Chair: Jeremy, you said that yours was just a little question. Let us see whether that is the case.

Q27 **Lord Purvis of Tweed:** Mine is a follow-up to Baroness Blackstone's question. I was slightly struck by the neutral to positive terms in your answer on our relationship with China. We clearly know of its huge scale and the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative. Equally, we know that on any transparency index it is bottom in its relationships, whereas DfID has an excellent record of transparency.

We also know that there is a growing picture of the conditionality which it has put on its support. One example is Huawei, which is the dominant technology provider in 40 of the countries in Africa, operating two-thirds of the 4G network. We know of its ability to use that technological

development for political purposes, and the lack of information security is very troubling. The list can go on.

Should the dialogue be not just about how we get a slice of state-backed, politically conditional, completely opaque potential projects but about a more meaningful dialogue about the whole premise of the partnership arrangements? Would it not be better to have a dialogue with China after we have had the high-level dialogue with the African Union?

Harriet Mathews: First, I want to say that we are clear-eyed. I hope I did not represent the discussions as purely trying to get a slice. It is a broad discussion. As I said, there are areas where we have quite strong disagreements, including on a more widely held position on what the Chinese would see as interference and what we would say is engagement and necessary change.

That conversation has definitely been had. I have had it; it was robust. We talked about some of the other areas around debt sustainability, the business environment, transparency and wider security. It is a good conversation that spans the areas we have in common, as well as other areas where we are further apart.

The Chair: Thank you. I turn to Baroness Helic for our last question in the tiny number of minutes remaining.

Q28 **Baroness Helic:** I will be as quick as possible with a very quick question: how is Africa's policy co-ordinated in Whitehall and across the network? If I might use this moment to come back to Jane, could we get more information on how often DfID probes the effectiveness of the Global Fund's policy to combat fraud and corruption? We make a contribution every year. It is a mature organisation that has been around for 20 years. I know that it has its marching orders et cetera, but do we know that the policy in place is actually effective? I do not need an answer now, but I would love to have a more comprehensive response if possible.

Harriet Mathews: Very briefly, but trying to include lots of information, the FCO and DfID are overseen by a joint Minister, which has made a very big difference and helps to bring that element of co-ordination together. The Minister himself also has regular co-ordination meetings with other ministers on Africa, including from Defence and DIT. There is a good co-ordination at the political level.

I talked about five shifts. Each of those shifts has two Senior Responsible Officers. DfID and the Foreign Office lead on three of them. We do Sahel and demography together. I lead on security, so the lead is the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence. Prosperity is DfID and DIT; and climate change, as Jane said, is DfID and BEIS. You have a director-level Senior Responsible Officer who has a structure underneath them and is co-ordinating the whole government piece on those. They report up to a DG, who is in DfID at the moment.

Baroness Helic: Do we have anyone on human rights?

Harriet Mathews: We do not have a shift on human rights, but there are another couple of elements. I chair a cross-Whitehall group on Africa, which includes the Home Office, DfID, the Stabilisation Unit—various different components. That tends to look at issues country by country. We take high-risk issues in the sorts of places that we have talked about, where there is often a risk of conflict, but not necessarily, and where there is a cross-departmental interest. In those stages, we have that conversation across and report up. Human rights are a key part of that. In particular, there is gender, which also aligns with the CSSF fund, so it is the same group that manages and has responsibility, or accountability, for that funding.

We have also established a Joint Africa Unit, headed by a senior member of staff. It is there as a body to drive efforts across Whitehall and to hold us accountable, to ensure that we are delivering.

We have also established a series of joint units. We have had one on Sudan for a while, one on Somalia and another on Nigeria, and we have just established a Joint Sahel Unit as well. We are really trying to integrate efforts across government, so that there is a single, unified policy direction that everyone is working together to deliver.

The Chair: Jane, from the point of view of working in DfID, how does that co-ordination feel?

Jane Edmondson: That is a perfect description. It is worth saying that although we have these pairings of different departments to work on things, and we have teams underneath that which bring in other expertise and working groups. Demography is a good example; as well as the FCO, we bring in the Department of Health, the Office for National Statistics, and on the climate side we bring in Defra and others. That includes the research arms of those organisations, another enabling thing within it that gets co-ordinated as well.

There is very close working. As we saw, there are people from Harriet's team who spend some of their time sitting in our office, and vice versa, during the week. Over the past two or three years, that has been the mode of working.

Harriet Mathews: We have not talked about the network, where they also have business plans which are to be integrated and which we assess each year to see what progress they have made, as well as having regular meetings on that risk piece.

Jane Edmondson: Just to come back on the Global Fund point, there is an accountability mechanism which my Global Fund department colleagues can give you the fuller answer on, so we will come back to you on that.

The Chair: Thank you. You have heard from the Committee their interests. We certainly grasped just how complex and wide-ranging a subject we were embarking upon when we selected this topic. We will

continue to learn, and we look forward to hearing of more of the work by the Foreign Office and DfID, and to taking you up on your offer of the readout details from the trade summit last week.

We are also looking for further information that is being published about the Africa Strategy itself. No doubt we will also come back to you for further elucidation on some of our questions today, which we may want to pursue offline. Thank you very much. I now close the public session of our meeting today.