



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HC 385

Wednesday 27 November 2024

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Emily Thornberry (Chair); Aphra Brandreth; Richard Foord; Claire Hazelgrove; Uma Kumaran; Blair McDougall; Abtisam Mohamed; Edward Morello; Matthew Patrick; Sir John Whittingdale.

Questions 72 - 149

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon. David Lammy MP, Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE, Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon. David Lammy and Sir Philip Barton.

Q72 **Chair:** Today the Committee is holding its first evidence session on the work of the Foreign Secretary. We have a lot of questions to get through today. We heard from you—thank you—Sir Philip, last week, so we are going to primarily be directing our questions to the Foreign Secretary. We would appreciate direct and concise answers to the questions because we have a lot of questions and I know that you want to try to get away promptly at the end. Welcome to the Foreign Affairs Committee, Foreign Secretary. Could you briefly begin by setting out your priorities and mission statement from the FCDO.

Mr Lammy: Thank you very much, Chair. It is wonderful to be before the Committee. I look forward to engaging with you over the coming Parliament. I have to start with what I feel we inherited as a Department. It was a Department where there had been a merger that this Committee and others quite rightly found had gone very badly. Morale was lower than it should be, although I want to give some credit to Andrew Mitchell and David Cameron particularly for beginning to turn that ship around.

It is also against a backdrop in which clearly the geopolitical environment is extraordinarily tough. There are wars in Europe and Gaza. There is a terrible crisis in Sudan. There is a context in which we had badly damaged our relationships in Europe. We were on the backfoot with the global south particularly. We had abandoned our climate leadership under Rishi Sunak. This was against a backdrop in which, as you know, coming into Government growth was our central theme and we have a £22 billion black hole, in which you would expect the FCDO to play its part.

I have instigated three reviews that I think are important for the purposes of this Committee. One is centring growth in the Department because, in the end, if we are not the international delivery arm of the Government's growth objective, that is a serious problem. Martin Donnelly is leading that review. One is on our global impact and our relationship particularly with the global south and middle power countries, led by Ngairé Woods. Because of the longstanding discussion about the place between development and diplomacy, Minouche Shafik is leading that work on development particularly.

Those remain my priorities but, day to day, as I have set about my work, a reset with Europe was very important, centring growth and getting back our climate leadership particularly. I have been ensuring that I am engaged in the world, and that is why I have done lots of travel and been in many countries over the last few months—it has only been four and a half months of course—to communicate that Britain is back and we are engaged. Because of the wars and the crisis, it remains the case that Ukraine particularly, but also the crisis in the Middle East, has dominated much of my time.



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Q73 **Chair:** Could I ask you specifically about something that has happened overnight? That is, we hope, the welcome news of a ceasefire in Lebanon. In the past, I know that Britain has given training and support to the Lebanese army so that it can play an important role in the blue line. Can I assume that we are going to renew that support in the future as a part of this peace deal?

Mr Lammy: Yes, and I would hope we would increase that support over this coming period. As you know, I sought to get to Lebanon both in Opposition and immediately upon coming into office. I gripped very quickly the potential for a crisis situation in Lebanon. It was very important that we put on planes and other things if people wanted to leave. I engaged substantially with the Speaker in Lebanon and Prime Minister Mikati on many occasions and during many phone calls. I was the first G7 Foreign Minister, and we were the first country, to call for a ceasefire. We have been working very closely with US and French colleagues right behind the Amos Hochstein plan.

I am delighted that a ceasefire has now happened. That was indicated in the G7 meeting I had in Rome on Monday. I am very pleased. You would expect us to be supporting the LAF as it tries to secure the south particularly. We want to be in a situation where Lebanese can move back south, Israelis can move back north and we see the end to fighting, gunshots and the death toll that we have seen, particularly of civilians.

Q74 **Chair:** Would you be happy to also commit today to increase our contribution to UNIFIL. At the moment, we only have one soldier on the blue line with a blue helmet on, whereas most of the European countries have hundreds within UNIFIL. I know that we give support to the Lebanese army, but can we also send more people to play an important, increased role on the blue line in Lebanon?

Mr Lammy: My commitment is for us to stand by Lebanon. That means increased support going forward. We play an important role. That has been primarily in support of the armed forces. I am happy to look again at our UNIFIL contribution, but I would want to do that in discussion with G7 partners, such as Italy, that play a big role—

Chair: They have more than 1,000, you see.

Mr Lammy: —and of course the Defence Secretary. The truth is that the load is spread across the globe. I do not want to commit troops just off the cuff here. I absolutely want to stand by Lebanon and to hope that that ceasefire holds and does all it can to ensure that those communities on both sides are able to move back to their homes.

Q75 **Chair:** I have just realised that Jimmy Lai's son is sitting behind Sir Philip. I just want to acknowledge you. I know that many people here have met you in the last few weeks.

In March 2017, shortly after the inauguration of Trump 1.0, I asked the then Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, about the new President's attitude



to climate change and in particular about the Paris climate agreement. He told me that I was being unduly pessimistic. He told me that Britain could use its considerable influence to encourage the President to see things our way. I do not need to remind the room that the President then pulled out of the Paris agreement, to the considerable detriment of our global fight against climate change.

We have heard a lot from around the Department in the last four months about leveraging our close allyship with the USA to influence Trump 2.0. If the former Foreign Secretary's jingoistic optimism failed to influence the President, I wondered whether you thought that progressive realism might be a better influence. Will it make any difference?

Mr Lammy: You have to deal with one President at a time. It is not until 20 January that President-elect Trump will come to office. The second thing that should guide us, particularly in relation to climate, is that, in speaking to Republican friends over the last few months, but also before the general election, they were at pains to emphasise that the Biden plan centred on the Inflation Reduction Act. A lot of those manufacturing jobs in that race to clean energy in the context of the United States are actually based in red states. They therefore are based in areas that, effectively, President Trump has won and more. For those reasons, the wholesale rolling back of the agenda that we have seen from the United States over the last five years was unlikely. That makes political sense to me.

There are rules on the degree to which we can engage with a transition Government before they have taken office, so I do not know what the current plans are in relation to climate, but I take some confidence from that. The tone and expression of course will be different from Joe Biden's Government. That is clear, but we have to wait and see. The immediate concerns that I am hearing, and of course you hear very strongly if you are in Washington DC, are around China, the economic threat of China and therefore the fallout of that, some of which will definitely impact on the climate agenda.

Q76 **Chair:** I have mentioned briefly climate change and the Middle East. I wondered where else in the world you think that the FCDO can currently have the most impact.

Mr Lammy: The Commonwealth is important. We must not forget our Commonwealth family, and I say that having just returned from Samoa with His Majesty the King. Our reset with Europe is vitally important in this period where there is war still on the continent and we have to work closely with our major allies. There is no doubt about it: the soft power of our development spend but also institutions such as the BBC World Service, the British Council and others is hugely important and should not be underestimated.

In four and half months in the job, I have found that the global community want us there. They want us in the room. They have missed



us. They are delighted when I am back in Indonesia, Laos or Nigeria. I could not believe that there had not been senior visits to South Africa. These countries want to see us again. They want to engage with us. They want to speak to us about the issues of the day, particularly energy, climate finance and those sorts of issues. They welcome Britain's return.

Q77 Chair: You have told us that the FCDO is undertaking lots of reviews. I wondered whether you would be kind enough to make sure that we can be written to and given the full list of all the reviews. I am not sure that we know for sure exactly what all the different reviews and the forthcoming strategies and so forth are. I wondered particularly about the China review and whether you would agree to publish all the reviews once they have happened, but also particularly whether you would come back and see us again to talk specifically about China when the China review is published.

Mr Lammy: Specifically on that, it is also the case—and I should have said this at the beginning—that the FCDO, like other Government Departments, has had so many Foreign Secretaries and Ministers that I have lost count. There is a sense, almost—there was at the beginning from diplomats and senior civil servants—that here again we have a new Foreign Secretary and a new set of Ministers. It has taken a little while, but it has definitely been gripped that, “No, this is a new Government”.

I know that there are the reviews that I have initiated, which I have explained, but also the China audit to which you refer. It is natural and important that we try to set an outlook that sustains us for what I hope is at least a decade and set a course that ensures that Britain is absolutely achieving all that the public and the world hope that we can achieve, particularly as a P5 nation, over this next decade. Of course we will write to you and keep you updated about the progress of that work.

Q78 Chair: When the audit is published, will you come and see us and talk to us about it?

Mr Lammy: I am happy to do that.

Q79 Chair: There is one review that I am particularly interested in. I am told that there is a small ministerial group looking at sanctions to see whether we have the right approach and whether our sanctions policy is properly resourced. There are many people who would say that the single biggest benefit of leaving the European Union is that we can now set our own sanctions policy, but we need to get it right. Sanctions can be a really good tool for foreign policy. It can deter malign behaviour and support human rights, but it has to be done in a way that is consistent, comprehensive and properly enforced.

I understand that yesterday the Treasury Committee heard from the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation. It heard that there had only been one £15,000 fine for a sanctions breach in the last year. We are in the early days of our sanctions policy. We want to make sure that we get it right. When this group of Ministers considers what we should do next,



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are they going to consider whether there should be some form of parliamentary scrutiny of our sanctions policy and implementation? It seems to me that there is no reason why our sanctions policy should not be a trailblazer for the rest of the world.

Mr Lammy: Yes, 100%. You will have seen that I have used the tool of sanctions pretty aggressively against Russia and the Russian shadow fleet particularly. I think that we have more sanctions against Putin and his shadow fleet than any other country in the world at this point. You are absolutely right that enforcement is key. We raised this as an issue. In fact, it was more or less a cross-party issue, because those in the last Government raised as well, from the Back Benches, that enforcement was not where you would expect it to be.

That is why we instigated a review. It needs more scrutiny and a thorough look. I want to be able to come back to the Committee on illicit finance generally, which I have said is a priority across the Government. There are announcements to come on how we might have a champion or envoy across Government taking on these issues. That clearly involves FCDO, the Home Office and the Treasury, and therefore we will come back to you.

Q80 **Chair:** This is the last question from me. What do you want to achieve in your first 12 months as Foreign Secretary? We want to be judging you against that. What should we review with you at our next session to see whether you have delivered results?

Mr Lammy: We can take at least one lesson from Donald Trump, and that is the art of the deal. Given that growth is such a central challenge for our country, judge me by the deals that I am able to secure over this next while. I have opened up foreign policy dialogues with the European Union under the FAC. Very important to that is the new EU defence pact. We need to secure that pact. We have begun discussion with our German colleagues about a new friendship treaty, which I hope will deliver for the British people and our friends in Germany.

I have a new tech security initiative with India, a new strategic partnership with Nigeria and a new growth plan with South Africa. We want to see returns on those deals between our countries. The Global Clean Power Alliance is an attempt by the Prime Minister, working with President Lula, Mia Mottley in Barbados and others, to get the climate finance particularly to the global south. That is a win for UK business and industry.

We have got off to a good start. I can see a few deals emerging. Judge me by more, because, in the end, growth is absolutely number one for our economy. The Foreign Office is not just a Department dealing with crises or geographic expertise. It has to be centring that growth on behalf of the Government's first mission.

Q81 **Edward Morello:** Foreign Secretary, you started off by saying that you



have been on the road, having visited some of our posts overseas. What is your view of our global footprint? Do we have the right people in the right places with the right facilities? If we do not, where are we wanting?

Mr Lammy: I am hugely impressed by the civil servants I have met and diplomats I have worked with. They are an impressive, bright, hugely committed and motivated group of people. We should be very proud indeed. We are still, as I say, a country to which much of the world looks. We have an important place on the UN Security Council. I was in New York last week, pushing forward on Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, hugely supported by Barbara Woodward and the fantastic team we have in New York. That is replicated across much of the world.

I am more or less comfortable with the footprint, but there are issues around skillset. I do not think that the Department reflects the country in socioeconomic background particularly and it certainly is not as diverse as some other parts of Whitehall. In terms of skillset, there should be much more fluidity between business and industry. You need economic and finance skills, given that we have a service economy and growth is so important. We need to work on that.

In the spending review with the Treasury, I was able to secure sufficient money for a change programme in the Department, so that people can come through, particularly people in the middle, and take up those leadership positions and others—it is definitely a top-heavy Department—are able to move out and make way. It is going to be a period of change, but change with the grain of the system. I think that, if you speak to our diplomats, they would reflect this back to us. It will be change that goes with what is now necessary for a 21st century foreign and development Department.

Q82 **Matthew Patrick:** Welcome, Foreign Secretary. When Sir Philip was with us a week ago, I asked a question about the fact that more men were receiving bonuses than women in the Foreign Office, which does not seem right to me. We asked for a note about the gender pay gap and by when it might be eradicated. The note says that there is no date that they aim or target in terms of eradication. My broad view is that, if we are not measuring that and do not have an end goal, we are never going to get there. Are you able to commit to the Foreign Office coming up with a date by which it aims to have eradicated the gender pay gap?

Mr Lammy: I am able to commit to better data, more data and more use of data in the Department over this next period. Of course I would want to see any gender pay gap eradicated. The Department has made rapid progress on this journey for better female leadership right across the Department. You see that reflected in our embassies across the world. There was a moment where I think the whole G7 had female ambassadors.

You have to get underneath the bonnet, which is what your question is doing. How much are they paid? Are they getting the correct bonuses?



What is going on in the system? There is a broader suite of issues across the diversities piece. The point is that there have to be the right KPIs, data and indicators on the back of that. I am sure that we are not quite there yet. You have my undertaking to get into that over this coming period, for sure.

Chair: I can assure you that we will keep asking until we find out when the deadline is going to be. I am going to set him on it.

Q83 **Matthew Patrick:** I have a comment on that. Coming from you, from the top, the suggestion that that is what you want to see is what is going to make change happen. In my experience of past organisations, when the top say, "We care about this and we would like you to get there", although you cannot always make that happen at the right time, it sets things in motion. That will be a really strong signal.

Mr Lammy: I support you in that. I am seasoned enough to know that, at some point, I may no longer be Foreign Secretary. You do not want what we have seen over these last few years, with a cycle of Foreign Secretaries and the system goes back to doing what it used to do. The question is how we can make this systemic, hence the reviews, the change programme that is coming and the scrutiny I welcome from the Select Committee.

Q84 **Edward Morello:** You mentioned in your previous answer about securing funding from the Treasury, which is timely. When Sir Philip visited us last week, along with the finance director, we were talking about funding for maintenance of the estate and the overseas footprint and the fact that that has traditionally been serviced by selling assets. Recently Tokyo and Bangkok raised about £1.1 billion. Your finance director says that that money runs out around 2026. His figure was an annual run cost of about low hundred millions. The National Audit Offices says £250 million. Have you had conversations with the Treasury about how that is funded once there is no more silverware to sell? Otherwise, presumably you have to cut something else within the FCDO to fund it.

Mr Lammy: We have begun those conversations, but I expect to get into detail in those conversations in the next spending review cycle. You are absolutely right. Our estate is hugely important and reflects our country abroad. There are some embassies in fine fettle, but there are others. For example, I was in China. That is not fit for purpose, frankly, for Britain in the 21st century. We will need some sort of capital pot to spend on that estate. That is a discussion that I will get into with Treasury colleagues over the coming months for this next spending cycle.

Q85 **Edward Morello:** If you do not secure the adequate funding, if it is £250 million, what has to be cut, or is there silverware that can be sold?

Mr Lammy: It was a tough spending envelope that we have just secured. In the end, I got a settlement of £11.5 billion for this next year and £12.2 billion going forward. I also had a tiny uplift, but it was there, on our ODA spending of £9.2 million. In a tough environment, the



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Department did relatively well, but you are right that that does not go to capital spend on buildings, so there is more to do. Perhaps, when I come back to the Committee, we will have a result on that and you can press me a bit more.

Q86 Claire Hazelgrove: Linked to the conversation we had last week with Sir Philip, at the start, Foreign Secretary, you touched on the fact that you inherited this failed merger when you first walked into the Department. I wondered whether you could please elaborate on that for us and set out some of those challenges that you have inherited and the work that you are undertaking and highlight for the Committee any particular areas of concern that you are still focusing on around that merger at this time.

Mr Lammy: The Department lost capability, particularly in development. Good people left the Department. There was a strong evidence base to much of the work that was going on on the development side. In a merger that was rushed, significant amounts were lost. Then there were cuts in-year that were very difficult in the field and damaged us reputationally.

Minouche Shafik's work will be very important to help us get back that capability and set a course. Anneliese Dodds is doing tremendous work leading on this agenda for us and for the Government, but let me outline the sorts of things that Anneliese and I have been looking at and discussing. One is to say that the world today is not the world that we were in when we were last in Government in 1997. China's belt and road has happened and is happening. There are countries such as India, Turkey and Brazil playing much bigger roles on the development side in their regions. We ought to be partnering with some of those countries in a deeper way, particularly in the continent of Africa.

When you speak to leaders in the global south, they say that they want partnership, not paternalism. That means that they want the same that we want for our country: growth and jobs. Then we have the challenges facing Europe of migration and people leaving areas that are experiencing the climate emergency, conflict fragility and other things.

All that has to be centred in our developmental work. Much of it remains really important on the humanitarian aid side, but what is development? What are our capabilities? How do we meet the sustainable development goals? How do we do more in relation to areas of huge expertise in this country, such as higher education, our science and innovation base, our health system and the health service and our education system? We have to do more and better work over the coming years.

Q87 Claire Hazelgrove: To follow up specifically, you touched there on the fact that you are looking to do more. Obviously, you are doing more with less because of the last Conservative Government's cut in terms of ODA from 0.7% to 0.5%. I wonder what your view is, Foreign Secretary, on whether that has harmed UK soft power.



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Mr Lammy: If I stressed more, some of that is different, because I also was stressing that we cannot just do the same that we did back in the last Labour Administration because the world has moved on. Of course I want us to get back to 0.7%, but I accept that it is a tough fiscal environment.

The work that Yvette Cooper is leading to deal with the huge backlogs that we have on asylum and immigration and to bear down on the spending on bills from people in hotels will put less pressure on the ODA budget and give us more to spend. That is why I am keen to work with her upstream on migration-type issues, but why I am also pressing her to go quicker and faster to deal with that crisis that we have in our hotels, so that we can spend that money better in country and not on housing people in hotels in our own country.

Q88 **Claire Hazelgrove:** On that question in terms of the soft power aspect, do you believe that that downgrade in spending has had an impact on Britain's role in the world and how we are seen in terms of our soft power and influence?

Mr Lammy: It had a major impact on our reputation because of the way it was done particularly. If I am honest, when I have been, as I was recently, in Nigeria, South Africa or Laos, I am not finding that that is the first thing that people are raising with me. They have now adjusted. It is the case—and I hope that you will see this in terms of our IDA replenishment and the multilateral arrangements that we participate in—that we can still play an important and significant role. There are difficult choices that we have to make.

Q89 **Chair:** Do you agree with the Permanent Secretary, who said that the cut to the ODA budget gave the impression that we were an unreliable partner?

Mr Lammy: Yes, I do.

Q90 **Chair:** I thought you might.

Mr Lammy: Am I being too diplomatic, Chair?

Chair: You are being diplomatic. I am just saying. Let us move on. John, you wanted to talk about soft power as well.

Q91 **Sir John Whittingdale:** Foreign Secretary, in relation to soft power you are responsible for certain instruments, such as the BBC World Service, the British Council and the Chevening programme. We understand that you are establishing a soft power council. DCMS covers a lot of other areas, but you could also include the Department for Education, the Ministry of Justice and even the royal family. Can you say something about the new council? When is it going to be established? What are its terms of reference? Who will be on it?

Mr Lammy: This comes out of a view, which I hope you might share, that, despite the huge soft power assets that we have, from the BBC



World Service to the Tate, the royal family and our development spend, we have not been punching above our weight in this area. We have certainly not been as co-ordinated as we could be. In foreign policy terms, at the same time middle powers particularly are investing heavily in this area, and we have to be fit for purpose.

You can look at the Republic of Korea and what it is doing. You can look at Türkiye and its investment in broadcast over this last period. Sadly, you can look at our political adversaries, such as Russia. We have to be really focused and better co-ordinated. The co-ordination between DCMS and FCDO has not been as strong as it could have been. I am really keen to work closely with Lisa Nandy.

I hope to establish the soft power council soon. The names that will be on that council will be familiar to you, Sir John. You will know many of them from your experience. It is an attempt to co-ordinate better, get better bang for our bucks and look at the gaps and what more we could do. There is a job of work for me to do. I got a good funding settlement for the BBC World Service in the spending review, which I was very pleased about.

Chair: So were we.

Mr Lammy: There is more to do with the British Council. It is still doing tremendous work. I saw wonderful work when I was in India, but I do not think that the British Council is doing as much as it would like to be doing over this period.

The other thing that I am really aware of is that, when I was last in Government, the innovation in the system that was really shaking up British soft power, both domestically and internationally, was the lottery. How can we think fresh about new sources of income or better co-ordinated income that might give us bang for our buck internationally? Those are the sorts of questions that I will be challenging the soft power council to answer for us.

Q92 **Sir John Whittingdale:** In terms of delivering on objectives, there are some that are easy to measure, such as the number of visitors who come to the UK or the number of overseas students who come to be educated here. How are you going to quantify influence? Are you going to have specific targets and objectives that you will seek to achieve?

Mr Lammy: This is a perennial debate in DCMS and the Foreign Office. What does success look like? How do we measure it? My instinct is that, in the change that I outlined, with new personnel and stronger priorities and objectives particularly around growth, and in an area of public policy where there are some very assertive countries in that middle power group, we will need more KPIs than we currently have. It will take some work to work out what those are. I hope that the reviews that are under way, particularly the global impact review, might help us in that regard.



Q93 **Edward Morello:** You mentioned in passing there that you do not think that the British Council is doing as much as it should or wants to.

Mr Lammy: It is not doing as much as it used to because of cuts.

Q94 **Edward Morello:** Also, it is being forced to pay back its covid loan at commercial interest rates. Do you think that that is consistent with trying to get it to do more?

Mr Lammy: It is a very challenging environment for the British Council. As I said, the truth is that I had to prioritise in the spending review that we have just come out of. I was pleased that I was able to secure further funds for the BBC World Service. I was not able to do that for the British Council, but it is a work in progress. I hope to return to the issue.

Chair: We would all be disappointed if we did not hear the question that we know Uma is going to ask.

Q95 **Uma Kumaran:** Thank you, Foreign Secretary. We have been leading a review into the soft power impact on BBC World Service and I have asked every person who has attended this same question, including Sir Philip Barton. We have discussed recently about the closure of BBC Arabic radio. This same frequency has now been taken over by Russia Today. We have had examples where the frequencies of channels that the BBC has previously broadcast on have been bought by Russia Today, Sputnik or Chinese state media.

Experts have called it a disaster for the region, with no fair or impartial news being made available. They have said that it was a trusted source and there is no longer any impartial news. Do you think that future assessments of funding for the World Service should consider the impact on international and national security and disinformation in our world?

Mr Lammy: Yes, I do. Let us be absolutely crystal clear about this. In the tough geopolitical environment that I outlined, I am worried about the emerging axis between countries such as Russia, Iran and the DPRK. This Committee no doubt will be very focused on the hard power and some of the challenges we have with war and conflict. That will dominate much of your time, I suspect, over the course of this Parliament. If we think back to the Cold War period, it was also the case we had to win the battle of hearts and minds. We all know that, in the end, you do not get change solely through hard power; soft power is important.

If it is the case that the British language or the work of the BBC World Service are receding and other countries are stepping in, I am afraid that I do not think that we are living up to generations of the past. I was pleased to secure the uplift of £32.6 million in the last spending review to ensure that we were not in a position where the BBC World Service was having to close language services. I am grateful to the representations that the BBC made and to the Treasury for understanding that case. I believe that the basis of your question is entirely right.



Q96 Aphra Brandreth: I was pleased to hear you say that the Commonwealth is important in one of your earlier answers. You attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting with the Prime Minister recently. However, there were notable absences, with both the South African and Indian Prime Ministers choosing instead to attend the BRICS summit chaired by Vladimir Putin and held in Russia. Both India and South Africa are important players in the Commonwealth and offer much in terms of their contributions, so it is regretful that they did not attend. Why do you think these leaders opted to attend the BRICS summit? What can be done to improve the value of the Commonwealth so that leaders treat it and CHOGM as a priority?

Mr Lammy: If you look at the multilateral forums at the moment and the multilateral system as a whole, clearly the UN is having tremendous challenges with Russia and China using their vetoes and disrupting our ability to achieve consensus. I was hugely disappointed to be at the UN last week on a Sudan humanitarian resolution where Russia chose to exercise its veto at the last minute, for example.

Of course it is the case that other forums in which we come together become really important. The G7 is hugely important for us. The G20 is an important forum as well. It seems to me that the Commonwealth is unique because of its footprint globally. The Australians and those in the Pacific islands say to me that it is an ability to engage with countries in Africa in a way that would be very difficult if we did not have this forum. If you look at the things that bind countries together, there is the political, the cultural and the economic. When I challenged leaders and Foreign Ministers as to why they were off to BRICS, they tended to say, "It is the economic that is important to us". We have to recognise that China, as a superpower, is there. They played down the political coming together.

The Commonwealth as an institution is not a political coming together. That is self-evident. There are countries that are non-aligned in that group, as well as countries like ourselves. Some say that it is an interesting forum because neither of the superpowers are there and they quite like it for that reason.

There is more to do economically. I was very pleased when I was there to kickstart and put quite a lot into a trade initiative across the Commonwealth family, recognising that huge trading partners such as India, Canada, Australia, Singapore and South Africa are around the table. It accounts for 9% of total UK trade, worth £164 billion. There is more that we can do and need to do over this coming period. I know that the Singaporeans were pressing this as we were around the table because, in the end, it is growth that leaders and Foreign Secretaries want to see in their respective countries.

Going back to the other heading of "cultural", the wonderful strength of the Commonwealth is its young people. The youth profile across the Commonwealth is impressive and amazing, particularly because of the



representation on the African continent. You have countries such as Togo and Gabon that are joining at this time. That is what I keep in mind. We have a new Secretary-General starting, so this is a new refresh period for the Commonwealth. It will probably be more focused on growth, particularly initiatives around young people and education. Its core strengths will mean that it remains a powerful body over the coming decades.

Q97 **Aphra Brandreth:** That answered some of my next question, which was helpful. At the conclusion of CHOGM, a communique was signed by the 56 Heads of Government, which outlined the issues discussed at the summit. As you know, the communique acknowledges the calls for discussions on reparatory justice for the abhorrent transatlantic slave trade. You are on record as supporting reparations in the past and I understand that this is an issue that you will feel strongly about.

I believe in 2018 you said in the House of Commons, as a member of the British Caribbean community, "We don't just want to hear an apology. We want reparation". I understand the context of those remarks and that they were at the time in relation to the Windrush scandal. Nonetheless, as a then senior member of the Opposition, your remarks would have been heard by other countries that seek reparations. Indeed, I think Sir Hilary Beckles, who is a leading reparations campaigner, has called you a supporter of discourse on reparations. Given those past comments that you have made, do you accept that those who support financial reparations in other countries will feel encouraged by your position to escalate this matter and put pressure on the UK Government to make payments?

Mr Lammy: The starting point is to recognise that the Commonwealth brings together countries that are very diverse. This was not just a Commonwealth meeting of Caribbean nations. We have Pacific states there. We have many African countries there. As I was talking about before, we launched the investment plan of action to mobilise investment across the Commonwealth. That is the number one thing people care about. We were talking about climate finance and climate initiatives. That was the number one thing that Commonwealth members were talking about.

Thank you for recognising that, back in 2018, I was the leading voice in Parliament on the Windrush scandal. I am afraid that it was a very low moment in our national story. I make no apologies for bringing that scandal to public attention. It was the treatment of a generation of people that came to this country and made a huge commitment, building our railways and our NHS. They gave so much and took so little. The way that they were denied services by the Government of the day caused a lot of pain and concern right across British society. It was in relation to that that I talked about the compensation that so many of those families have still been denied as a result of that scandal. I know that Yvette



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Cooper and colleagues are getting to grip to make sure that that injustice is dealt with. That is quite separate to the issue that you are referring to.

The Caribbean nations that make up part of the Commonwealth family have a 10-point action plan. If you read that 10-point action plan, you will see that, like a lot of middle-income countries, they are talking about more investment in tech; they are talking about climate finance and the climate emergency, because it affects those islands acutely; they are talking about education and health. Those are areas where we absolutely, in terms of the future, would intend to be in dialogue with the Caribbean. That is why we have, for example, a £200 million infrastructure fund with Caribbean nations, assisting them when there are hurricanes and other things.

That was the nature of the conversation. There was no discussion about reparation and money. The Prime Minister and I were absolutely clear that we will not be making cash transfers and payments to the Caribbean, but we are absolutely happy to have the dialogue about the future and our future relationships, and we will continue with those.

Q98 Aphra Brandreth: To clarify on that, as you have alluded to, the Prime Minister committed to engaging in meaningful, truthful and respectful conversations about reparations.

Mr Lammy: No. Language is really important.

Aphra Brandreth: It is.

Mr Lammy: I do not think that you will find the word “reparations” in the communique.

Q99 Aphra Brandreth: Can I clarify how you think he and you intend to fulfil those commitments? When you say “conversations”, do you intend for there to be actual outcomes at the end of those and will there be a financial tag attached to them?

Mr Lammy: You have pushed me on the word “reparation”. I have pushed back and said that it is not in the communique. I do not know whether you have read the communique. It is not in the communique. It was never put to us in that way. I know that there was some coverage in the British media along those lines, but that is not in the communique. The phrase that is in the communique is not that. It is—you do not know, do you?

Q100 Aphra Brandreth: I am hoping that you are going to tell me, as you are the Foreign Secretary.

Mr Lammy: You ought to look at the communique if you are going to put the question. The phrase is “reparative justice”. That was the phrase that they used. In that context, they talked about a dialogue. I have just said to you that we are happy to get to that dialogue. They talked about the future: tech, education and health. We are happy to have that conversation with the Caribbean. We are already investing in climate



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finance. That was the nature of the conversation. There is a caricature about sending cash and I have rejected that caricature. I think that I have answered your question decisively.

Q101 **Aphra Brandreth:** You are saying that you are looking at things like investing in tech, etc. I am asking whether you have considered whether there is a financial aspect to that, or you are simply going to give words but not actually follow through with a financial element?

Mr Lammy: We already invest in the Caribbean. We have a £200 billion infrastructure fund. We have embassies right across the Caribbean. We have overseas territories in the Caribbean. We are already doing things with the Caribbean.

Q102 **Aphra Brandreth:** You feel that that addresses the communique of reparatory justice.

Mr Lammy: I have simply clarified for you the conversation that we had, not the caricature that was sometimes put in the papers. I have done that quite strongly. My ancestors were slaves and I do not run away from that fact. That is a fact. It was a terrible time. I am very proud to have been part of a Government under Tony Blair where we commemorated the abolition of the slave trade, the tremendous work done by people such as Wilberforce and the city of Hull, the work in places such as Liverpool and Bristol, the campaigns and the ordinary people across this country fighting to end that terrible moment.

At this point in time, we now look forward. We look to the future. We look to hope and possibility with those countries. There is much that we can do together. Climate finance is the centre of that. I was very pleased to be with Mia Mottley just a few days ago on a platform at COP on these issues. It is the future that we should keep in mind, not payments of the kind that I saw in the papers but were not raised with me by any leader that I met and that I am afraid the British Government are very clear on that we cannot do.

Q103 **Aphra Brandreth:** I have a final question with the future in mind. Between now and the next Heads of Government meeting, are there any clear and explicit outcomes, not to do with this last topic but in general, for what you would like to see us progress on with CHOGM and with our Commonwealth friends and partners?

Mr Lammy: I am hugely excited by this moment. We have a new King who is really inspirational and was inspirational to spend time with in Samoa. We have new initiatives, including new scholarships for Commonwealth young people. I hope to be able to say more about that in the coming months. We have a new Secretary-General, so I think that there will be a renewed focus within the Commonwealth. I want to build on the investment plan of action that I launched at the Commonwealth and grow more in terms of growth, economy and trade across the Commonwealth family. There will be sharper focus at this time particularly on the strengths of the Commonwealth, and education is an



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example of that. This is an exciting time and it is a time of change and possibility for sure.

Chair: We are starting to slip behind, so could we perhaps speed up a little bit and have slightly shorter answers and questions? I am sorry to do this, but if we are going to finish on time, which I think you want to, we need to move on fairly rapidly and deal with the huge subject of climate and nature as shortly as you can, please.

Q104 **Claire Hazelgrove:** There is just a small topic there, Foreign Secretary. You have touched on this in some of your previous answers, but I was keen to dive into it in further detail. In your Kew Gardens speech, you said that action on the climate and nature crisis will be central to all that the Foreign Office does. What changes have you made to start to see this come to fruition and what plans do you have to further advance this as well, noting your comment earlier about the back step we have seen under the last Government?

Mr Lammy: It was very important to make that my first speech, to centre climate in that speech and to say that it is a foreign policy issue. It goes to the heart of security, the problems without passports that we see in the world, migration being one of those. It was very important to see the Prime Minister and President Lula launch the Global Clean Power Alliance in Rio off the back of my speech. In this last period, reaffirming the £11.6 billion that we want to spend in climate finance is really important. The £3 billion on nature, of which £1.5 billion is on forests and working alongside, for example, indigenous communities is extremely exciting.

We are going to need leadership over this period as we press for MDB reform. The appointment of two envoys on climate and nature is an important contribution. All of it is being done to get back our climate leadership role and to support those in the global south in their race for clean energy at this time as well.

Q105 **Claire Hazelgrove:** Looking ahead to you returning to be in front of this Committee in, say, a year's time, what would success look like across this period? How do we judge that there has been success and good progress on those measures that you are starting to set out there and bring about?

Mr Lammy: I would certainly like to see the Global Clean Power Alliance beginning to deliver for the global south on the finance side. I would like to see the sorts of changes we would want to see in the World Bank and the IMF bearing fruit over this next horizon. COP was a challenge and Ed Miliband conveyed that at the Dispatch Box. Nevertheless, the world came together and agreed the \$300 billion, which is really significant and important.

At this time, on behalf of taxpayers, I think that we all understand that this is not just about taxpayers' money. It is about the role of private corporate funds as well in the private sector, alongside philanthropy. How



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we lever to grow that \$300 billion so we meet 1.5° is essential. We have to stay alongside those, such as indigenous communities, that are the custodians of our forests at this time, as well as grow the green jobs within our own country. I hope that, in a year's time, you will be able to measure and see some of that. Of course, in this area this is not just about UK leadership. It is about partnership globally, particularly with the big emitters in the world.

Q106 Claire Hazelgrove: Yes, absolutely. You made it very clear earlier, Foreign Secretary, that growth is central to your and the Department's work. I was wondering whether you have red lines when it comes to climate and nature, for example in a trade deal. Unfortunately, not every country around the world shares our ambition for tackling the climate and nature crisis at this pace. What would you do in that scenario? Are you finding it an issue already in some negotiations? What are the UK's red lines on climate when it comes to trade?

Mr Lammy: We are pretty clear that we have made decisions, particularly about not offering any more licences in the North Sea. We have made internal decisions. We have seen the end of coal, effectively, here in the UK. Therefore, as we partner with countries, we are having that dialogue about fossil fuels particularly. We also have to be sensitive that countries have different starting points, particularly in the global south, as we work with them. This is not about hectoring or lecturing. That tends not to work. It is about encouragement, nudging, supporting where we can and growing, as I say, those who race to clean energy, because that is a win also for British business.

Q107 Claire Hazelgrove: I have one final question on this area. You touched on COP there, and you were there very recently. You talked about the outcome being quite positive. COP has been criticised, however, for perhaps not being able to tackle the challenge at the pace that is needed. I wondered about your reflections on that and whether you feel that, more broadly, we have the forums that we need to tackle the scale of the issue internationally.

Mr Lammy: It is over 190 countries coming together. This is the vehicle that we have. It is frustrating. You are trying to get consensus. This is not always easy, but we are making progress. It is not always as fast as we would like it to be. Someone once said that diplomacy feels like it is failing until it wins, if you see what I mean. I do not say that it is not hard and not frustrating, but we were able to make progress at this COP. I have huge hopes for the COP in Brazil next year and you will see good partnership there between the UK and Brazil particularly.

Q108 Richard Foord: At the outset, Foreign Secretary, it was really good to hear you say that relations with the European Union will probably be one of your top priorities as Foreign Secretary; I think you said one of the top three priorities. I wonder if you could say a little bit more, please, about the reset. What does the reset between the UK and the EU mean in terms of our relationship?



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Mr Lammy: Under the last Government, we ended in a place where our relations with Europe felt pretty thin. The war in Europe, of course, meant that we had to come together, but I did not detect the strongest of relationships with, for example, our German, French and Irish counterparts, and so it has been essential to fix that.

I was really pleased to be invited to the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union and to open up dialogue. I hope to have the opportunity to return on a regular basis and to be able to discuss issues of importance to us, such as China or climate, for example, and the common positions that you would expect us to reach.

It has been important to centre defence. This is a period where, of course, NATO is first, but we also see that, as a result of Ukraine, there is much that we can do together on cyber, on sanctions and on other arenas of dispute and conflict in Europe. Take the west Balkans, for example, or Moldova, where I was recently, which is experiencing serious cyber threats from Russia.

Bilaterally, the Prime Minister and I have set about mending our relationship with Ireland with, effectively, a new deal, and I will come back to you and talk about that. You will measure me against that, as I have said. We hope to have a new deal with our German colleagues, I suspect after their general election, but we will get there. We hope to have an upgrade to the Lancaster House agreement with our French friends. There will be a summit again next year. I went to Poland on day one in the job, forging very strong relations with the Tusk Government, particularly Radek Sikorski.

Then there are tricky issues that I hope we will be able to get past, such as the Gibraltar issue, for example, where I am picking up the discussions that David Cameron was entering into and hoping that we can solve those problems with Spain, while being absolutely clear about the importance of Gibraltar's sovereignty.

There is a range of fronts, but, in a sense, the reset is about getting into those issues that I have just outlined, being serious about those issues, and recognising that, yes, we are outside of the European Union, but we are absolutely not outside of Europe. Of course, it is important that we are able to refresh Boris Johnson's bad deal that we got from the European Union. My colleague, Nick Thomas-Symonds, is leading on that for us. We have said that we do not want to enter the single market or the customs union, but there is much that we can do together. Now, with a new Commission in play, as we head into next year, those discussions can begin.

Q109 **Chair:** Richard, before you ask your next question, because that was quite a comprehensive answer, can I just ask this? Next time you come, what are the three things that we are measuring you against when it comes to our relationship with the European Union? What can we say are the three things that you will have done between now and when we see



you next?

Mr Lammy: There are more than three things—

Chair: Just give us the top three.

Mr Lammy: —because there are 27 countries across Europe, and we have a war in Europe. It would be remiss if I did not centre the crisis that we have in Europe with Ukraine, particularly in supporting Ukraine as it deals with Russian aggression. It would probably be wrong if I did not say that that remains the number one issue and the number one subject that I discuss with fellow European Foreign Ministers. We all want to see a conclusion to that war, in which Ukraine prevails with its territorial integrity.

Over this next period, in terms of both foreign policy and my direct relationship with the European Union, not only the new deal that we want to strike with it but also those key bilateral relationships, you will be able to talk about what is in that new friendship treaty with Germany, what is in a refreshed Lancaster House agreement and what the result is of that re-engagement with Ireland. I also hope that we can make progress on Gibraltar.

Q110 **Richard Foord:** You use the language of a friendship treaty with Germany, which evokes quite a warm, fuzzy feeling, but I do wonder whether, on the defence and security side, we are going to see something that is really substantial and meaningful. We know, for example, that Europe would like the UK to put more into our links with it in relation to defence and security. Would we consider, for example, an association with the European Defence Agency or the European Peace Facility?

Mr Lammy: All of those things are under consideration, but they all have to be done within a fiscal environment, particularly with our obligations to NATO, and within the context of the strategic defence review that the Defence Secretary is conducting. I cannot make that commitment here in front of the Committee, but I recognise why you raise those, for example.

In the western Balkans, for example, there is more that the UK can do, and I am thinking back to the considerable work that Tony Blair did the last time that Labour was in power and the contribution that we made to the western Balkans.

Q111 **Richard Foord:** In terms of what the EU asks for from us, it has often asked that we reinvigorate the youth mobility arrangements that we used to have, or at least have an EU-UK youth mobility scheme. You have often turned that down, on the basis that we do not want to re-enter freedom of movement, and I get that, but this is not freedom of movement. What is it that is stopping us from undertaking a youth mobility scheme?

Mr Lammy: We have no plans in relation to youth mobility, and we have made that clear. That did come up under the last Commission, but we



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have a new Commission, which is barely days old. We will enter into discussion with them in good faith, but we have set out some red lines. Free movement is one of those red lines.

I recognise that European colleagues raise, for example, a fall in the number of school trips that young people are making in both directions, and that cannot be a good thing. All of us want to see young people travelling to France and Germany, and vice versa.

I do recognise that Europeans raise those issues, but what I am not going to do, and I know that my colleague Nick Thomas-Symonds will not be keen to do, is a blow-by-blow that you read across the papers in those negotiations and war among ourselves, or whatever. These are serious discussions that we will enter into in a spirit of good faith, and we will have to see where we get to.

Q112 Matthew Patrick: I cannot imagine the horror that Emily Damari, now well over a year in captivity in Gaza, is going through. I know that you have talked about stepping up diplomatic efforts to secure her release. Could you update us on those efforts, what that looks like, and what progress is being made to get Emily home?

Mr Lammy: What can I say? I have met with Emily's courageous and inspirational mother, as has the Prime Minister. We are in pretty regular contact. It is quite emotional, thinking about the plight of Emily and particularly the hostages who have some connection to the UK, but about all of those hostages, and about those families not knowing the fate of their loved ones.

We continue to press for a ceasefire. I have been calling for a ceasefire now for almost 12 months, and working day on day to secure it. I am pleased that, today, we are talking at least about a ceasefire in Lebanon, but that ceasefire in Gaza has still eluded the international community.

That has principally, of course, been through working with Israel and with our US colleagues. I was with Tony Blinken again on Monday, discussing what prospects we might have with the Qataris and others who have routes into Hamas. We are doing all that we can, frankly, both to find signs of life and to assist with those hostages, but, as I say, that ceasefire has eluded us.

I cannot update the Committee today, and I wish that I could give you good news, but I have no news in relation to that particular file.

Q113 Matthew Patrick: Thank you for your answer and for your daily efforts to secure her release. There is an extremely concerning situation in Gaza in relation to aid, which is desperately and urgently needed to increase. I read reports that suggest that some elements of aid require going through about 10 sign-off processes by different bodies. That means that it takes over a month to get certain basic foods in there. How can that be streamlined to speed that process up and ensure that we get the aid into



Gaza?

Mr Lammy: I spoke to Commissioner Lazzarini this morning about the situation in Gaza. At this point in time, the situation is so bleak that, to quote his words, there are no words—words fail me. As you know, the UK has sent, and continues to send, a lot of aid.

We are particularly focused—and I have particularly been focused in office—on medical aid and the support that we want to give the Gazans, many of whom are injured or ill as a consequence of the famine that is setting in, but the issue now remains the ability to get the aid distributed across the country, the lawlessness that has set in and the widespread looting of the aid that is there, and the constant displacement of people from one area to another area, who are then not allowed back.

Northern Gaza is now a zone that people have been pushed out of increasingly, and there is still quite a strong IDF presence. The situation is just tremendously horrendous. It is appalling. The reports of starvation and famine are deeply worrying.

I also need to say to this Committee that I had to make a very sober, hard assessment on whether we could continue to send arms to Gaza under our robust export licensing regime. The reasons that I decided that I had to suspend exports of arms to Gaza that could be in breach of international humanitarian law were, first, that when I looked at the assessments there was a clear risk, on that legislation, on the issues of aid and access, and starvation.

Second, there was an issue on the treatment of detainees and some issues that I am sure would concern the Committee in relation to that particular group. That is why I had to make the decision to suspend arms, and those were issues that went to the heart of international humanitarian law.

Q114 **Matthew Patrick:** What assessment have you made of the concerns raised by the Israeli military of a Hamas resurgence? Does that further jeopardise the efforts to get aid into Gaza? I worry that it makes what sounds like an incredibly difficult task borderline impossible. What is your assessment of those claims? What is your assessment of the nature of the conflict and how that impinges on getting aid in?

Mr Lammy: What Commissioner Lazzarini tells me is that the Israelis are placing very strong restrictions on what can get into Gaza. From conversation with Foreign Minister Saar and former Foreign Minister Katz, Israel raises concerns about equipment that might get in on those trucks and then be used against IDF soldiers or, indeed, the Israeli population. I recognise that there are those concerns, and that is why they say that there are restrictions.

As I said, there is now widespread looting. There are no journalists in Gaza and there are no politicians such as me who are able to go to Gaza, so I am unable to verify who is behind the looting, but there is clearly now



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widespread criminality, so the situation is, I suspect, tremendously complex.

What I have to keep in mind is that, notwithstanding the evils of the Hamas terrorist group—and let me be absolutely clear about the abhorrence of 7 October and all that happened, and what Hamas represents—there are, among that population, innocent civilians at death's door. This is a conflict in which the largest group of people who have lost their lives are children. This is something that causes tremendous concern. It is definitely an issue that Foreign Ministers across the G7 are just deeply concerned and frustrated about at this time.

Matthew Patrick: With the Chair's indulgence, I am going to ask a short question.

Chair: You will have to give a short answer. It is a very important subject. It is just we are under such time constraints.

Mr Lammy: I am so sorry. I am happy to come back.

Q115 **Matthew Patrick:** You mentioned the work of UNRWA, which is vital in getting much-needed aid in, but I am also aware of the £1 million that we have invested in the reforms that we feel are necessary. I believe you committed to an annual audit of the work done to introduce those reforms. Will the outcome of that audit be made public? By when will that audit have taken place?

Mr Lammy: We reinstated the funds to UNRWA at the beginning of September, I think it was. Forgive me if I have that wrong.

Sir Philip Barton: It was July.

Mr Lammy: Forgive me, sorry; it was July. I spoke to Madame Colonna to make that decision and read her report. Of that, £1 million is, as you say, for the reforms that are necessary. I did raise that with Mr Lazzarini this morning, and of course we talked about UNWRA because of the Knesset Bills and the suggestion that all support to UNWRA would be suspended entirely, which would have huge, catastrophic implications, not just in Gaza but also in the occupied territories.

Therefore, of course, I will update the Committee and update the House on the work that we have put behind that reform. Clearly, this is a changing picture, and at this point in time it is still the intent, it would seem, to withdraw complete support from UNWRA, and therefore there may be very little for us to report on if that were to go ahead next July. I am doing a lot of work to ensure that that is not the case. It would be the wrong decision for Israel's security and it would certainly be the wrong decision for the people who rely on the services of UNWRA in both Gaza and the occupied territories.

Q116 **Chair:** What are you going to do to stop the Israelis implementing the UNWRA Bill, then? This is going to be within the Knesset. It is so



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important that this does not happen, so what is Britain doing in order to stop that?

Mr Lammy: It is not just Britain acting on its own. On Monday, at the G7, this was a topic of discussion across all Foreign Ministers. We were all unified in our concerns about UNWRA. There was a communique that flowed from that, in which that was referred to. There is a lot of diplomatic activity going on at the moment to urge the Israelis not to implement those Bills and to impress on the Israelis that we think that this would be catastrophic for their own security.

Let us just focus on the West Bank and East Jerusalem. UNWRA is providing healthcare and schools, not just food and aid. It would be catastrophic to withdraw those services, and, if you were withdrawing those services, I assume the Israelis are saying that they are going to provide them, which would be very problematic for them.

There are legal obligations as an occupying power. I am afraid that the international community is very clear about those obligations as an occupying power, and we have to hold Israel to account. I expect, as a democratic nation, Israel has to keep in mind its obligations under international law.

Q117 **Abtissam Mohamed:** Foreign Secretary, my questions will be in relation to the West Bank and the annexation that is due to take place there. Over the last 30 years, there has been a 134% increase in the number of settlements in the West Bank. The ICJ ruled in July of this year that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal. We heard the comments from Minister Smotrich in relation to 2025 being the year of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria.

With the likely intention of an annexation taking place next year and this potentially bringing an end to any view of a Palestinian state, if annexation does take place, what will our Government's response be? Will it be consistent and in line with the response that we have had in relation to annexation in Ukraine? We have given economic sanctions to Russia and severe diplomatic sanctions as well. Given that this is quite a severe thing, many Palestinians will be looking to see what will happen and potentially it could be the conclusion of a recognition. What will the actions be?

Mr Lammy: I want to be crystal clear: it is the UK Government's position that we want to see two states. We want to see a secure and safe Israel, but the Palestinian cause and desire for a state of their own is an admirable one, which I would want to support. There can be no room for annexation, which would be illegal and quite outwith international law and international norms. I have heard that talked about but, again, across the G7, which I have just come from, there was widespread concern about any suggestion of annexation, because annexation would run a coach and horses through the Oslo accords and through our desire for a two-state solution to this problem.



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Q118 **Abtisam Mohamed:** If it goes ahead, what actions would we take in consequence?

Mr Lammy: I understand why you are pushing—of course I do—but I am not going to engage in hypotheticals of that kind. I am going to do all I can to ensure that that does not happen.

Q119 **Abtisam Mohamed:** My second question relates to the ICC arrest warrants that were issued. In light of the arrest warrants and us standing by international law, which was absolutely the right decision, respecting the international legal system, will you as Foreign Secretary, and the officials, continue to engage and meet with a man who is now wanted for war crimes?

Mr Lammy: On the basis of what you have just said to me, there are two things that I am holding at the same time. One is our obligations under the statute of Rome and our powerful belief in both the rule of law and international humanitarian law. We have to wait, in the coming days and weeks, for what they call a note verbale to make its way to our embassy, so that we get instructions that we are to enforce these warrants were they to arise. Under our legislation, section 2 of the International Criminal Court's legislation, there is an obligation on me to transmit to the courts should those named seek to come into our country. That does not allow me any discretion. I will issue that and transmit that to the courts, and then the courts will make their determination under our law, recognising that we are signatories to the Statute of Rome and these are very serious issues indeed.

Q120 **Chair:** Before we move on, though, I am just thinking about the answer that you gave to Abtisam. I just want to follow it up because it is important. You were talking about the G7 and about discussions. Presumably, it has been raised that there is a possibility that there may be an illegal annexation. Even if you cannot speculate and tell us about sensitive conversations, is there a plan B if Israel does try to annex?

Mr Lammy: I want to keep hope alive. What is the hope? The hope is that Israel is able to secure a normalisation deal with Saudi Arabia and, as part of that normalisation deal, there is a pathway to a Palestinian state and a two-state solution.

We all recognise that, under President-elect Trump's presidency last time around, it was able to secure the Abraham accords and normalisation followed with countries such as Bahrain, Morocco and the UAE. It would be a great achievement if Saudi Arabia were able to secure that, but all of us who have been to the region know that is impossible without two states and without that promise for the Palestinian people. That is where a lot of us will be focusing our attention over the coming months.

Q121 **Abtisam Mohamed:** I have two follow-ups. You spoke earlier about judging you by the deals that you achieve. Will the recognition of a Palestinian state be among those deals?



Mr Lammy: I have said that, if we get normalisation, then, by definition, I suspect that we are on a path to two states. We have said that recognition is a tool; it does not deliver that end but it is an important stepping stone on the road. For example, you could see recognition alongside a deal of that kind.

Q122 **Abtisam Mohamed:** Just coming back to my second question about the arrest warrants, I do not think you have answered my question. If there were opportunities to engage or meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu, would you still engage in discussions, given that he is a wanted man? Has there been a precedent for engaging with somebody where arrest warrants are in place?

Mr Lammy: I am informed, of course, by the Attorney General and lawyers. I believe that there can be engagement in emergency situations, for sure. Some people criticised the fact that I met with Bibi Netanyahu, but I absolutely stand by the ability to talk to Bibi Netanyahu about access and aid, as I did in the first few weeks in office, to be able to talk about Gaza, normalisation and Lebanon, and to be able to question on things like UNIFIL or our support for the Lebanese armed forces.

Those are important matters that require engagement from those of us in Government. It would be hugely problematic were we not able to do that on behalf of our country, our constituents and everyone who wants to see a ceasefire, wants to see the aid get in and wants to see those hostages get out. I have to be able to talk to the Prime Minister if I am serious about getting Emily Damari home. I cannot see circumstances under which I would not be speaking to the elected representatives of the Israeli Government.

Q123 **Uma Kumaran:** Foreign Secretary, my questions are on sanctions. I am going to focus the first two on the situation in Gaza. You have been clear, including in the Chamber yesterday, that you will not be drawn on sanctions that are under consideration. I have previously written to you about the use of Magnitsky sanctions. I want to ask you about the way that decisions are made rather than forthcoming decisions. What has prompted your Department's review of the sanctions policy, and will the review consider sanctions designations as well as implementation?

Mr Lammy: We have been pretty good on the designations. They do take a lot of work. There is a lot of work forensically on the individuals or organisations that are under consideration. There is a lot of work legally to make sure that we are on the right side of the law and that that the sanctions that we put in place are fair and not subject to legal challenge. They usually engage more than one Government Department to put that work together. They sometimes involve agencies such as the NCA and others, but the designation process itself I am pretty comfortable with, notwithstanding that all Governments do not have endless resources, and this is a lot of resource, certainly for the FCDO particularly.



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In my period, you have seen a record number of sanctions, particularly on Russia, Putin and the system there, but also in relation to settler violence and some of my concerns about expansion particularly.

The review specifically is about enforcing those sanctions, given the question that the Chair raised with me right at the very beginning. We do not talk about designations because it would undermine the effect of the sanctions if we did; by definition, people would move things around, disappear and all sorts. It would make it harder to do the job. That is why we do not talk about designations as a Government, but of course I recognise that both in Parliament and probably around this Committee, people will have views and express those views. You are free to do that, and we are listening.

Q124 Uma Kumaran: I welcome the fact that earlier you said that you are open to more scrutiny and a thorough look at, and parliamentary scrutiny of, sanctions policy as well.

Turning to what the UN has said in relation to what is going on in Gaza, UN legal experts have issued a statement calling for sanctions on individuals and entities involved in the unlawful occupation in the Gaza Strip. In October, an average of just 37 trucks of aid per day entered, compared to over 500 entering per day prior to 7 October last year. In November, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reported that there is a strong likelihood that famine is currently ongoing in northern Gaza. You acknowledged this today.

You have said that sanctions designations are kept under review, but what does this mean in practice for those on the ground in Gaza, in the context of an aid blockade and an escalating humanitarian crisis?

Mr Lammy: Sanctions is one tool, and it is a tool that have used in this part of the world particularly looking at issues in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. On the broader issues of aid and the tremendous suffering that we are seeing in Gaza, the effort is to get a ceasefire. That is why I was talking to Commissioner Lazzarini this morning. The effort of the whole international community is to see a surge in aid and get aid into Gaza.

I was talking to King Abdullah a few weeks ago. There is tremendous frustration in Jordan. Jordan is a really close partner of the United Kingdom. King Abdullah is keen to have an air bridge—we are giving him a lot of support in the planning of that—to do airdrops into Gaza. We will support him with that endeavour. The aid question is about getting the aid in. I do not think it is entirely about sanctions policy.

Q125 Uma Kumaran: I have a question in relation to this Government's stance on international obligations. Today marks an important day for Tamil people around the world. In 2023, you urged the then British Government to stand shoulder to shoulder with Tamils and consider the recommendation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to refer



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perpetrators of atrocities to the International Criminal Court. The then Leader of the Opposition also urged the then Government to consider the recommendation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for an international justice mechanism.

I am really pleased to say that you are now the Foreign Secretary and he is now the Prime Minister. Can I ask you today to stand by your comments and refer them to the ICC?

Mr Lammy: We have a new Government that have just taken up in Sri Lanka. The signs are positive in relation to the atrocities and human rights abuses of the past, particularly. It is important that Minister West and I are able to engage with that new Government. We are looking at the range of policy in relation to the atrocities of the past.

As you know, I have spent a lot of time over the years with Tamil communities, particularly in this country, so I recognise the strength of feeling and why you have raised these issues. They are complex issues. Nevertheless, that goes back to conflict in which deep, painful atrocities were committed. It is important that those who did that are held to account.

Chair: We have very little time and we have a lot of the world left to get around. I will move on to China.

Q126 **Blair McDougall:** We will try to do China quickly. Thank you for your offer to come and talk about the China audit when it is complete. When speaking about that, you have used this mantra of “co-operation, competition and challenge”. I wanted to focus on the relationship between two of those. The “co-operation” part of that suggests the trade and investment, which is something we want, but the “challenge” part suggests that there is something that China wants, which we can give it.

In order for the “challenge” part of that relationship to work, what are we willing not to give it? For example, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Prime Minister goes to China next year, what are they willing not to give in order to, for example, secure the release of Jimmy Lai, if he is still in arbitrary detention at that point?

Mr Lammy: I understand the thrust of your question. The starting point is to make an honest assessment of where UK policy is in relation to China. If I was being generous, I would describe the last Government’s policy in relation to China as woefully inconsistent, bouncing around from the golden age under David Cameron to Liz Truss’s position of China as a threat. You then have people such as Chris Patten and Iain Duncan Smith with different positions. We did not have a consistent policy and, worse than that, there was no engagement.

Q127 **Chair:** Secretary of State, the question is not that. The question is about how we challenge. That is the question. It is important.



Mr Lammy: The reason why I sought to start the question like that was simply to say that the engagement that we have begun, after a period of six years of no engagement from Prime Ministers, has only just begun. It is very hard to broker changes in behaviour, particularly where we disagree passionately on cases such as Jimmy Lai's, if there is no relationship.

That is why I have underlined the three Cs, which are very important. Britain will not resile from our views on the national security law in Hong Kong. We will not resile from important concerns that we have for Uyghurs or for Jimmy Lai, and we challenge because we must do.

Diplomacy is about engagement. There is no diplomacy without engagement and without sustained conversations. That is why it was important that, when I went to China, I was able to reopen dialogues between our countries on different areas. We can co-operate on some of those areas, such as climate or health. There are lots of parts of trade that are not matters of huge concern. Both sides want to see more of it, but there are important security concerns in some areas, where we will compete and be pretty exacting about what we are unable to do trade with China on.

Q128 **Blair McDougall:** I appreciate absolutely the point that you are four and a half months in. When I have had conversations with Jimmy Lai's son, he is very grateful for what you have done personally and what the Prime Minister has done.

More backward-looking, in the last few years the Canadians have managed to get the two Michaels out of China; the Australians got, under the Labour Government, Cheng Lei out of China; the US got pastor David Lin out, and today another three prisoners were released there. After nearly four years of solitary confinement, we have not been able to get our citizen out. Is there something particular about the UK-Chinese relationship that makes it more difficult for us to get what we want in these situations, or is there something particular about the way British diplomacy has attempted to do it? Is it the context or is it our toolbox that is lacking?

Mr Lammy: The context is the lack of engagement between the UK and China. That is the difference between us and the United States; that is the difference between us and, say, Australia. It is important to say that the Chinese-Australian relationship has had the imposition of tariffs and has had big differences of opinion. Again, there was a change in approach by the Albanese Government, which also talked about the three Cs and have entered into a different place. The results that you suggest indicate that that engagement has borne fruit.

Despite the tremendous strains between the United States and China, President Biden, Janet Yellen and others have had a lot of contact with their opposite numbers. That is what the Prime Minister and I are seeking to replicate, because it is only with a relationship that we can get results



in that areas that really matter to us, as you are indicating in your questions.

Q129 **Blair McDougall:** A couple of years ago, Foreign Secretary, you made the commitment to make consular assistance a legal right for people. A year later, you committed to a new special envoy for arbitrary detention. Do you want to give us an update on both of those? Is there a timeline for achieving them? I have asked about Jimmy Lai, but I could have asked about Alaa Abd El-Fattah, Ryan Cornelius or any number of cases. There are obviously bigger issues, and there is a toolbox question about whether we have the framework we need to get success in these cases.

Mr Lammy: I hope to announce an envoy, an individual who will deal with those more complex detention cases. I have been looking hard at the 28,000 people, at any one time, who come through our system. It varies from someone who is arrested for being drunk in Magaluf to high-profile cases where British citizens have, sadly, lost their lives abroad, for varied reasons.

Overwhelmingly, I want to pay tribute to the consular staff and the way that we support people, but, in these more complex cases, there are issues that we saw in Opposition. I remain sure, in office, that those issues remain. We need a tightening of grip in relation to how we deal with that. I hope to come forward with proposals. Let me just say that we were informed by this Committee's previous reports and concerns about the way those complex cases were being dealt with, and, informed by this Committee's own work, we will be coming forward with plans in the coming months.

Q130 **Blair McDougall:** What about the legal right to consular access?

Mr Lammy: I have to stick to my form of words: we will be coming forward with plans in the coming months. We have not quite got there.

Blair McDougall: I will take yes for an answer.

Q131 **Sir John Whittingdale:** One of the reasons why Jimmy Lai is in prison is because of his work in setting up an independent newspaper. Unfortunately, the number of journalists who are killed or imprisoned has been steadily rising. The UK helped set up the global Media Freedom Coalition in 2019. Can you say whether the Foreign Office is still making global media freedom a priority? What levers are you willing to pull to try to achieve it?

Mr Lammy: I recognise that the last Government prioritised working with media on the ground, grass roots, in communities all across the world. That was important work. I am focused, in relation to that work, on disinformation and misinformation particularly. That is a particular issue in countries such as Moldova in Europe, where we are supporting and doing work. I am also keen, as you would expect from a progressive Foreign Secretary, to be clear that the rules-based order particularly, and



the broader family of issues that sit under the human rights umbrella, are also on our minds as we endeavour in that work.

We are looking at this holistically, but the work that I saw under the last Government in this area was good work, and I hope that it will continue.

Q132 Sir John Whittingdale: Can I move on to a couple of questions about the British overseas territories, specifically the Chagos islands? It is now about seven weeks since you told Parliament about the agreement with the Mauritian Government, but we still have not seen any details of the treaty that that entails or the financial arrangements that will be attached to it. Can you say when those are going to be put before Parliament?

Mr Lammy: The first thing is that we had the broad arrangements of a deal, and we came to Parliament to be very clear and to announce that we felt that we had reached a deal.

I should say that these discussions were begun under the last Government. There were 10 rounds of discussion. We picked this up and put a lot of effort into it. We put that effort into it because we believed that national security was at stake, particularly working with our closest ally, the United States, on its understandable national security concerns, to get that deal over the line and to strike a good deal. I am really pleased with the deal that we have struck.

You are right that, at the same time, there has been an election in Mauritius and we have only just engaged with the new Government in Mauritius. There was an exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and the new leader of Mauritius, and I was very pleased to see him confirming that he is open to this deal. We have to give him time to get into the arrangements for the deal, but I hope in due course that we can sign the treaty and we can bring these issues before Parliament in the usual way.

Q133 Chair: Is Jonathan Powell on his way to Mauritius now?

Mr Lammy: No, he is not on his way to Mauritius. He is back from Mauritius. We saw him yesterday.

Q134 Chair: The Prime Minister has expressed doubts about the agreement after meeting Jonathan Powell.

Mr Lammy: I have seen those reports. I can only pray in aid the exchange of letters that we had with the new Prime Minister of Mauritius. I am very confident that this is a deal that the Mauritians will see, in a cross-party sense, as a good deal for them.

Q135 Sir John Whittingdale: The new Prime Minister of Mauritius actually described it as "high treason" and a "sell-out". That does not sound as if he is going to be very happy with it. Are you likely to offer more money as part of the deal with Mauritius?

Mr Lammy: He did not say that yesterday, did he?



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Q136 **Sir John Whittingdale:** He did not say it yesterday. He did say it during his election campaign. People say things in election campaigns that do not actually happen.

Mr Lammy: Both you and I have said things during an election in order to get elected. He did not say that yesterday.

Q137 **Sir John Whittingdale:** Yes, indeed. The likely incoming Secretary of State in the United States has also expressed severe doubts about this treaty. Do you actually think that it is going to come about?

Mr Lammy: Let us be clear, because this is incredibly serious. I am sad that there has been so much politicking about this. This process began under the last Government, and there were Ministers who understood entirely why this is so important for our national security and global national security. The agencies in the United States think this is a good deal, the State Department in the United States thinks this is a good deal and, most important of all, the Pentagon and the White House think this is a good deal. That is not just the principal politicians in those areas; it is the system.

What we inherited was a situation where the base was insecure as a result of decisions made by the International Court of Justice, and the legal basis for Diego Garcia was under tremendous threat. We had to pick that up and try to secure the future of the base for many generations to come. That is what we did and it is a very good deal, most particularly for our national security. I am really reassured about that. An incoming Administration will be reassured about that, and I am confident that the Mauritians are still sure about that, despite the politicking that we all know goes on.

Sir John Whittingdale: I am sure we may return to this.

Q138 **Aphra Brandreth:** There was reporting recently of phone hacking in the British high commission in Mauritius. Can I ask whether you have launched an investigation into whether our post in Mauritius was affected? Are you aware of any risks that discussions that you held were potentially recorded?

Mr Lammy: If you talk to me about risk, cyber-attacks and the security of our systems is one of those risk register issues that I and Philip necessarily are engaged with. There are adversaries who would seek to undermine us by getting inside our systems. The issue that you refer to is being properly investigated and fully understood. I have not had conversations at the high security levels in that way, in a way that could be breached, because that would not be appropriate for me as Foreign Secretary. My conversations in relation to some of the issues that we discussed are had in different forums, in the safest of environments, not across technology.

Q139 **Richard Foord:** I would like to ask first, Foreign Secretary, about the business of frozen Russian assets. Clearly, your Government have made



a positive step by seizing and confiscating the interest on assets that we hold here in the UK, but what about the principal? What about the assets themselves? We know that Czechia, Finland and Estonia have managed to seize and confiscate those assets and offer them to Ukraine. Can we not do the same in the UK? Why not?

Mr Lammy: It is an area that is important for us to lead on. There is a debate across Europe. There are differences of opinion, in terms of both legal systems and the legal veracity of that move. There are complex issues within our own legal system to work through.

My bottom line is that Putin should pay for this war of aggression, and we should use all means necessary to ensure that he pays for the aggression, not us, ultimately, when this is determined. It is hugely important that we support Ukraine with all of the funds necessary. My focus is to get it the funds that it needs, and the money out the door quickly. That is why we made a pledge to get the equipment out the door within 100 days. There is the extra £3 billion that we have found for military support.

We need to encourage others. That is in terms of the ERA loan that is on the table, to get it into Ukraine's coffers for 2025, and to ensure that it is in a strong, sustainable position into 2025. There is a broader discussion on what more, in terms of funds and assets, and I will continue to have those conversations. Of course, the Baltics are very strong on that. As you know, the UK is generally aligned with the Baltic nations in relation to how we see this threat from Putin.

Q140 **Richard Foord:** I have a question on security guarantees. We can sense that there is not a consensus among NATO countries for Ukraine joining NATO at this time. If we fail to get that consensus in the future, will the UK consider offering a different sort of security guarantee so that we do not see a further aggression against Ukraine?

Mr Lammy: We were able to agree at NATO that there is an irreversible path for Ukraine to NATO membership. That was the right position to reach, and I was pleased that we reached that consensus. Of course, we have to ensure as European allies that, when this is over, Putin cannot come back for more. That means that Ukraine will need the necessary security guarantees. It means, too, that this has to be stronger than the deal that was pulled off by France and Germany, the Minsk agreements, which did not give Ukraine that surety. I am not going to make a commitment that commits troops. I cannot do that in this Select Committee and, if I did, that would be the main story coming out of the Select Committee, but I understand the strength of your feeling and why Ukraine will need those security guarantees.

Q141 **Sir John Whittingdale:** Just to follow up from Richard's question, this Government and indeed the last have been hugely supportive of Ukraine in terms of financial assistance, but that is relatively small in comparison to that which has come from the United States. There are real concerns



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about the continuation of that and the answer to it may be to use the Russian money that is frozen, in order to ensure that Ukraine is still able to afford to defend itself. Is that something you will now examine urgently?

Mr Lammy: We are examining those issues, alongside European colleagues.

Q142 **Sir John Whittingdale:** Can we look forward to legislation?

Mr Lammy: I said we are examining those issues. I also said the issues are complex and, frankly, you are not going to achieve the end result if countries are going in unilaterally at this piece. My number one focus was ensuring that the UK was the most forward leading in our support and with £12.8 billion, so £7.8 billion on military aid and £5 billion of economic and humanitarian support, we are in that strong position.

It was alongside the Defence Secretary in making sure that we did not just make pledges, but that we got it out the door in 100 days. We are doing that as well, all to put Ukraine in the strongest position and to urge our European colleagues not to be over focused on 20 January, but to recognise that winter has come. It is here. Let us put Ukraine in a stronger position now. That is what we are centred on.

Chair: We have some questions on post-conflict states.

Q143 **Matthew Patrick:** It may be very immediately post-conflict, but what lessons from the ceasefire achieved in Lebanon will you take for our efforts to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza?

Mr Lammy: It is UK leadership. We were the first country to call for a ceasefire. We gathered together our G7 partners very quickly. We were clear on supporting the Amos Hochstein plan. It was the right plan. We had UN resolution 1701 that we all stood behind. We have been investing in the Lebanese army now for many years. It was not frequently discussed, frankly, in the House prior to the crisis in Lebanon. I was in Lebanon last January as shadow Foreign Secretary because I could see what was happening in the region. It was getting ahead, being on it, UK leadership and playing our part in securing that ceasefire, and I am pleased that we did that.

Q144 **Matthew Patrick:** In the spirit of getting ahead, we are hoping to achieve the ceasefire in Gaza and we are hoping that there will be a rebuilding then of Gaza.

Mr Lammy: Absolutely.

Matthew Patrick: What lessons can we learn from our past that we need to learn in those next steps for Gaza to bring about its redevelopment and reconstruction? I am thinking about Iraq.

Mr Lammy: You are right to focus on the day after. This crisis will end. Gaza has to be rebuilt. There is a challenge at the moment, because if



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you speak to any Arab partner, they are not prepared to commit funding off the back of occupation. They are not prepared to commit funding with no guarantee that they will not be spending that money again in 20 years' time.

Nevertheless, Israel needs to feel secure in its borders and to feel that 7 October is not going to happen again. That takes guarantees that help Israel feel secure. That means working with partners to secure that. Clearly, reconstruction will have to begin and that also means leadership in terms of international institutions like the World Bank, IMF and others.

There is much work to do on that roadmap for the future of Gaza and the UK is playing its role on the day after and what takes place. I was discussing that with the Quint of Arab states on Monday, but at this point in time there is still a lot of angst, upset and frustration that the ceasefire has not arrived. Therefore, we are not able to implement the day after and get on with the business of reconstructing Gaza. I would be remiss if I did not say that there is concern that there are some in the Israeli system who do not intend to leave.

Q145 Matthew Patrick: You mentioned some of the guarantees that we would need to offer Israel as an ally for it to feel secure in a region that has seen the devastating attack of 7 October. Could you comment on the nature of those and what we as a UK Government can do to offer those reassurances?

Mr Lammy: Thank you for the question, because it is important to put this on record. People forget that Israel had put up for several years with rocket fire from Hamas into Tel Aviv and broader Israel. Israel had put up with rocket fire from Hezbollah. It had a devastating atrocity committed on it on 7 October and that has caused national trauma, understandably. If our country had experienced something like that, the trauma would have been deep and longstanding.

Notwithstanding the ceasefire that has been achieved in Lebanon, the real test is whether people can go back to their homes in northern Israel, and we will all see over the coming weeks whether people feel secure enough. That is the test in the end, so people can live safe within their borders. The UK will play its role in achieving that.

It has not come up really at the Committee today that we must not forget the pernicious role of Iran in this, sitting behind proxies, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis and others, and an ideology that wants to see Israel driven into the sea and that is busy at the moment on nuclear enrichment, which we must stand up to and against, because it would make the Middle East more dangerous than it currently is if we saw nuclear escalation as well. This is complex, but that gets to the heart of the guarantees that the Israeli people rightly and appropriately need to see if we are to get to peace in the region.

Chair: Would you indulge us, Secretary of State?



Mr Lammy: Of course.

Chair: I am very grateful to you for staying longer than you said.

Mr Lammy: I do not even know what time it is.

Chair: It is fine. It is only 4.15, so let us carry on.

Mr Lammy: After four and a half months, the Committee has certainly put me through my paces.

Chair: We can ask lots of questions on Iran, if you allow us, but what I am going to try to do is keep to a very short number of questions on the United States, because we have to have some questions on the United States. We are a new Committee. We are very keen and, I have to say, I compliment fellow members of the Committee for being as disciplined as they have been and for getting us through, but I would like us to ask a few questions about the States.

Q146 **Aphra Brandreth:** Thank you, Foreign Secretary. I am sure you will agree that the US is our closest ally and that the special relationship is an alliance and friendship like no other. You have in the past made some extremely undiplomatic remarks about incoming US President Trump and, as you have noted today, language matters. Given some of your past remarks, including comparing President-elect Trump to Hitler in a tweet, calling him "a woman hating, neo-Nazi sympathising sociopath", calling him "a profound threat to the international order that has been the foundation of western progress for so long" and saying that Donald Trump is not welcome in our country, do you now regret your comments? What actions will you be taking to strengthen the special relationship with the incoming Trump Administration?

Mr Lammy: You are absolutely right that the United States is our closest ally. We have a very important, deep military partnership over many years. I think 10,000 US troops are based in this country and over 30,000 across Europe. We have tremendous intelligence capability, working with the United States and our Five Eyes partners. That was on show in the run-up to the war in Ukraine. We have over £1.1 trillion invested in each other's economies and 2 million jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. The truth is that, whoever is in the White House or Number 10 of whatever political party, our relationship is key and important, not just to our own populations, but to global security, and that will continue.

I have to tell you, I enjoyed meeting Donald Trump. He was a very gracious host in Trump Tower. The Prime Minister and I had a good meal. We had good discussion. We had a laugh in places and I look forward to working with him. I also met JD Vance before he become the VP candidate. We talked extensively about our two books and understanding of impoverished communities from different political perspectives.

I am a politician, Ms Brandreth, who has worked across the aisle for many years. That is why David Cameron asked me to lead a review into



the criminal justice system. It is why I have been able to have good conversation with William Hague, who was broadly a very successful Foreign Secretary under our last Conservative Government. It is why I have worked with Theresa May on human trafficking and a whole range of issues.

I look forward to working with Donald Trump. You will find, if you scan the tweets of the 2014-15 period of time, that all politicians from all descriptions had all sorts of things to say about Donald Trump. The last Foreign Secretary, David Cameron, described him as a misogynist and a xenophobe. He was able to go and see him in Mar-a-Lago, just as I and Keir Starmer were able to engage with him in Trump Tower just a few weeks ago.

Q147 **Aphra Brandreth:** Do you now regret your comments?

Mr Lammy: I am not looking back. I am looking forward. I am sitting here as Foreign Secretary and the country's chief diplomat, and I have sought to use for the last two and three-quarter hours diplomatic language, because that is what I am charged with doing. I will do everything possible on behalf of the British people in relation to our national interests and that is working with our close ally. Just as he has been gracious to me, I will be gracious to him. That is the way I was brought up in the great part of London called Tottenham and the great city of Peterborough. You are gracious to those who are gracious to you. That is what I have found in dealing with Donald Trump and that is what he can expect from me as Foreign Secretary.

Q148 **Edward Morello:** How confident are you under a Trump presidency that the USA would fulfil its article 5 obligations if it was called upon?

Mr Lammy: I am so sorry. I have just been reminded that I have an important meeting, so that is why I did not hear your questions.

Edward Morello: It is a very short one then. Under a Trump presidency, how confident would you be that the USA would fulfil its Article 5 obligations?

Mr Lammy: I am really confident. It is important to recognise that Donald Trump's pushing and cajoling of Europe to step up on defence spending is consistent with Eisenhower, Kennedy and Obama. They were all saying the same thing. When he came into office, there were four countries spending above 2% of their GDP. We fell backwards from the 2.5% we were spending. He was right about that and, in fact, he increased his spending on NATO, he increased the number of troops sent to Europe and he sent the first Javelins to Ukraine.

The rhetoric is tough and exacting under Donald Trump. The global community can look back and see that. He wants a deal. I have met him. He is certainly not a loser. I am quite sure that NATO as we understand it, the best alliance of countries the modern world has seen, will continue and go from strength to strength.



Q149 **Claire Hazelgrove:** This is the last question, we promise, Foreign Secretary, and we will let you go, but this feels important. I completely agree our relationship is incredibly special and important with the US. I have personally lived and worked in the US myself. Part of what makes our relationship so special is that it has been founded around, in part, shared values. With this incoming Administration, we have seen unfortunately, even over recent years, a bit of a reduction in some ways around women's rights, particularly reproductive rights.

To some extent to my question earlier about red lines, trade deals, discussions and relationships when it came to climate, I wonder if I could pose the same question to you here as well. If we see a continued infringement on women's rights, does that change the nature of our deals that you touched on earlier and how we go about our relationship with the US?

Mr Lammy: We are a progressive Government. We have our values and the United Kingdom will continue to support, for example, women's reproductive rights in much of the global south. That is very important work and that work has been consistent across Conservative and Labour Governments.

In thinking about our friends in the United States, it is really important that we recognise that women voted for Donald Trump in their millions, African-Americans voted for Donald Trump, and Latino and Hispanic communities voted for Donald Trump. It is incumbent on us, as politicians, to reflect on that democratic process that has now come to pass and that is why I look forward to working with the United States.

As Foreign Secretary, it is important for me to put this conflict of interest on the record. I am probably the biggest Atlanticist there has been as our chief diplomat. I have been to the United States more times than I have been to France. I have studied, I have worked, I have family, and my father is buried, in the United States. It is a country I have known over many years, and I have followed it through successive Presidents of different political persuasions. It is a great country and I remain excited, enthused and honoured to do this job.

I look forward to working with the United States, ultimately, to keep people safe, because that is what that partnership has achieved since the middle of the last century. We do not always get it right, but it has created a global order that by and large has kept many millions of people safe. It is a great honour to do this role and to have spent such a long time with you this afternoon. Thank you.

Chair: On that note, thank you both very much for your time this afternoon. We look forward to seeing you early next year I hope, Secretary of State. We can talk about the China review, Iran, Sudan and South America; we can talk. This time, Sir Philip, is your last time before the Committee and before your retirement I wanted to wish you all the best and thank you very much.



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Sir Philip Barton: Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate it.

Mr Lammy: Let me just put on record my thanks to Sir Philip. The transition into Government has been really smooth. Philip's commitment to ensure that we had an orderly transition, got up to speed as a group of Ministers as best we could and were able to implement our priorities has been exemplary. Let me also put on record my thanks to Philip Barton.

Sir Philip Barton: Thank you, Foreign Secretary.

Mr Lammy: I am very grateful indeed. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.