

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Future of UK aid, HC 1141

Tuesday 26 January 2021

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Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Theo Clarke; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Navendu Mishra; Kate Osamor; Mr Virendra Sharma.

Questions 1 to 61

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs; Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE, Permanent Under Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dominic Raab and Sir Philip Barton.

Q1 Chair: I welcome everybody to this session of the International Development Committee, where we are very honoured to be joined by the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab, and the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Philip Barton. Welcome both of you very much, and thank you very much to Committee members for being here today.

Foreign Secretary, could I start by asking basically a philosophical question? I wonder whether you could share with us your vision for aid going forward. What is its importance? What difference does it make? Why are you so passionate about it?

Dominic Raab: Thank you very much. It is a great pleasure to be in front of your Committee, Madam Chair. From my perspective, I have always been a believer in aid. One of the first things I did when we merged was hire Stefan Dercon, who is an aid economist and was Paul Collier's protégé at Oxford. My area of focus has been how we can get the most out of it and, more generally, how we can synchronise and drive integration with our foreign policy. The merger is a part of that, and the SR is a part of that; I appreciate we have not published it yet, but there has been a huge amount of work going on. I suspect you will be touching on this later. This is about bringing all of Whitehall together.

As we were chatting about just before we came into session, you can see it particularly acutely in east Africa and probably across the continent—in Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. If, for example, you take the threat of Al-Shabaab, that is not purely a security issue; it is clearly a development issue for all those countries and indeed for regional stability. Driving an integration of the approach so we do not have left hand/right hand is particularly important.

I believe in the UK's mission to be a force for good in the world, whether that is tackling climate change or dealing with what Paul Collier called "the bottom billion", so acute poverty and hunger. I also believe in integrating all the different tools we have at our disposal, from trade through to defence, seeing aid as a facilitator as well as doing projects on global public health, such as on malaria or AIDS. We know it has a fantastic USP in its own right, but it is also part of the toolkit of driving more impactful foreign policy and, particularly as we have left the European Union, a very positive vision of the UK as a force for good in the world.

Q2 Chair: What would be the top three things that concern you most at the moment? What are you doing to mitigate them?

Dominic Raab: We have had to focus our mind given the shift from 0.7% to 0.5%, but we were also looking at this in the integrated review. If you look at the ODA piece, it has forced us to think about what the top priority is. One priority is climate and biodiversity, in its own right, but



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particularly given that we have a leadership year where we are going to be co-hosting COP 26 in November.

Another is coronavirus. We have this huge pedigree of work on AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, but coronavirus has had a compound impact on famine and conflict. One of the first things we did on merger was allocate over £100 million for that particularly toxic cocktail of risk and appoint Nick Dyer as special envoy on this, because the lead we take in the financial contribution needs to be backed up by the convening power we have. Nick is extremely well placed there.

There is a whole range of other things. Again, coronavirus is the catalyst and not the cause, but we are looking at how science and technology play into our trade and development goals, and how that affects the LDCs and middle-income countries in particular. My background was in conflict, war crimes and accountability. I am particularly interested in the UK's comparative advantage in bringing all its tools together and being a problem-solving, conflict-resolving and conflict management country.

There is a risk of spreading ourselves too thinly, and I want the integrated review to look at how we give those ambitions focus, so we can marry the right level and the right combination of aspiration with realism about where we add the most impact. Those are a few of the priorities. They are reflected in the SR and the future SR but also the integrated review.

Q3 Chair: You have highlighted your seven priority areas. How do you monitor the outcomes? What are you planning to mitigate if things are starting to go astray?

Dominic Raab: Regardless of the SR or the IR, when I came in I wanted to look at our KPIs as a Department. We now have six-monthly and 12-monthly KPIs and regular reviews. I have a supervisory board that meets quarterly. When I was a junior Minister, I had the privilege of attending one at the Ministry of Justice, and I have brought that ethos in. On a quarterly level, we look at our performance, not just Ministers and DGs, but our NEDs come in. I hired Baroness Morrissey and a team of new NEDs, because I want that external challenge.

With ICAI, we commissioned a review, with a view not to weakening but to strengthening ICAI and, in particular, looking at two specific things. One is the value added, the impact, of not just aid money but development policy. Secondly, I genuinely want, including from your Committee, more critical evaluation. We want to embrace that, but also what are the practical recommendations, the lessons learned and the things we can do better?

Q4 Chair: Thank you for acknowledging the Committee's role in that. Yes, it is one we are pleased to take forward. We would also be keen to be involved in your 2021 development strategy, as we think we could add value, as well as the broader sector.



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Overnight I was told that a number of countries were receiving communications saying that they needed to cut 50% to 70% of their future budget. How do you make sure your priorities are still being met with a dramatically reduced budget?

Dominic Raab: The Foreign Office, as is the rest of Whitehall, is dealing with the implications of Covid on the economy and public finances. As you know, this is the biggest contraction we have been through in 300 years. We have double the budget deficit that we faced after the financial crash. We all have to look at that. I had long and, as you can imagine, quite intense and detail-focused discussions about this before we took the decision, but I understand that there are no easy choices across the public service and public sector piece.

We still have £10 billion to spend in the year that is coming. That still leaves us as one of the very top ODA spenders on DAC definitions, but you have to cut your coat according to your cloth. There are two things that matter most. The first is to have a clear set of strategic priorities rather than just trying to salami slice. In the context of both the IR and the SR—I published this, and you will have seen it in the written ministerial statement today but also the previous statements I have made in the House—we have set out our strategic priorities, because it is much better, smarter and, frankly, for the morale of any organisation, better, to focus on the positive priorities rather than just to snip. With the challenge we have, we could not do that.

The second thing is to be quite disciplined about it. I do not recognise the numbers you played back to me at all, because we have not concluded any of the internal allocations, country by country. What I do want to do is make sure we have a coherent approach right across Whitehall. When we had the shift to 0.5% before Christmas, I convened, effectively, an intensive process with different Departments and Secretaries of State—it is the first time it has been driven by the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, effectively the DFID Secretary of State—to make sure that we were looking at it from not just a fiscal and financial point of view, but a strategy and coherency point of view. Now we have those allocations, we will work out how they work on a country-by-country basis.

The answer, the lodestar, for me in this is strategic coherence, and to get through the merger and everything else we are doing with more impact by being more integrated. Of course, we have had to make difficult decisions. There is no shying away from that.

Chair: Thank you, Foreign Secretary. You have a lot on your plate.

Q5 **Chris Law:** Foreign Secretary, you have said the reduction to 0.5% is a temporary measure, so why then do you believe that new legislation is required?



Dominic Raab: I read with interest the letter you got from Lord Garnier today. It is a difficult and complex issue. As a former Foreign Office lawyer, I want to look at it very carefully. All I would say is that I am looking at the legislation right now very carefully. I want to make sure we have clear in our minds the requirements. I will set out further detail on exactly how we intend to proceed in due course, and I hope shortly. I want to get this resolved, but I want to get it done right, not quickly.

Q6 **Chris Law:** I am glad you have raised that letter, because it made for some interesting reading. As we know, Lord Garnier was Her Majesty's former Solicitor-General, who said in his letter to the Committee today, "Until Parliament changes that law on the statutory duty to meet the 0.7% target the Government must aim to hit it. It cannot deliberately aim off or fire blanks". He goes on to say that "until the statute is repealed or amended, the Government is subject to that law". How will acting unlawfully and flouting a clear legal obligation affect your reputation as a lawyer and the UK's international standing?

Dominic Raab: We are not flouting the legislation; we are taking it seriously. As I said, I read Edward Garnier's letter. There are different views on it. The most important thing now is not to react quickly but to do so assiduously and diligently. I will look at it very carefully. I explained the Government's basic position to the House. There are clear limits on the Government's ability to depart from 0.7% under the terms of the 2015 Act. We want to respect that legislation, and we will.

In terms of the current financial position the Chancellor has set out, we will look very carefully at what that means for the legislation. I will come forward and of course inform your Committee, but more generally the House, about how we intend to proceed.

Q7 **Chris Law:** The Government have said these cuts will be temporary and the 0.7% target will return when the fiscal situation allows. What indicators will you use to assess when a return to 0.7% is possible?

Dominic Raab: Ultimately, I would want to talk to the Chancellor about that. It is difficult to give the precise metrics, but we will need to see a correction of the public finances. The point that has been made fairly powerfully to me is that there has been a big structural hit to the public finances as a result of the coronavirus and its impact on the economy.

It will be contingent on us being able to correct that, but, obviously, as Secretary of State, I want to see us get back there as soon as possible. That is also the view of both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.

Q8 **Chris Law:** I take on board what you are saying about the public purse and the size of the national debt just now, but they must have some indication of how much national debt is acceptable before we return to that 0.7% figure. What specific criteria and indicators will be used?

Dominic Raab: It will be a mixture of art and science. You are right to point to the deficit and to debt. There will be competing pressures



domestically and internationally on the shrunken financial envelope. The question will also be contingent on how quickly the economy rebounds. It is difficult to give you precise metrics at this time, because of all those different factors. We will have to take a balanced judgment across the range of them.

Q9 **Chris Law:** Is it not the case, given the botched prorogation in 2019, the Internal Market Bill in 2020 and now reneging on the 0.7% commitment, that this so-called global Britain is quickly losing its moral authority on the world stage and showing that it cannot be trusted as a global partner?

Dominic Raab: It is interesting. Do not get me wrong: I always embrace the scrutiny we get from colleagues. When I go outside the UK and certainly outside the Brexit debate, I do not hear that kind of nonsense. I have just been to east Africa, where the role of the UK is treasured and cherished. They want to see more of us. Before that, I went to India before Christmas. We talked a lot about the Indo-Pacific tilt. It is hugely welcome not just on trade but also on security and tech, particularly cyber, and because of the UK's reputation for upholding the international rule of law.

Take what young people around the world think of this country. We had an Ipsos MORI poll done by the British Council recently, which showed the UK's standing in the world had increased in terms of attractiveness of the UK and trust in our institutions. In terms of the attractiveness of the UK to young people around the G20, the poll showed that we came top—in fact, we had increased since Brexit.

There is much more at play. If I may say this, we tend to self-flagellate, which is not necessarily a bad thing to do, about our place in the world, but we perhaps do not see ourselves in the way others do. The reality is that our stock is extremely high. Whether it is talking to young people in east Africa, to Dr Tedros at the WHO or to the Secretary-General of the UN, it is clear that they want to see more of the UK. Our priorities, from climate change to what we are doing on COVAX AMC, are hugely welcomed.

Q10 **Chair:** You said “when the fiscal situation allows”. What indicators are you arguing for to see that return to 0.7%?

Dominic Raab: We deliberate that right across Whitehall, and those are healthy discussions, but they are private. I accept that all the indicators that have been suggested to me will contribute, but in the end it requires a balanced assessment and a judgment call, which is part art and part science. We have to be confident that we have recovered from the fiscal battering that Covid has wreaked on the economy and the public finances.

Q11 **Theo Clarke:** Foreign Secretary, how are you embedding the sustainable development goals into the work of the FCDO?



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Dominic Raab: Thank you, Theo. Can I pay tribute to the huge amount of work you do in this area and the expertise you bring to the House and the Committee?

We are in the decade of action to get the SDGs delivered by 2030. We know the need is acute. The World Bank estimates that 150 million extra people could be pushed into extreme poverty as a result of Covid, so the challenge has got harder. The UK was instrumental in establishing the SDGs. From an IR and SR point of view, they are quite closely aligned with the strategy we have set out.

If you look at the development priorities I set out on 26 November to the House, improving global health is goal 3; tackling climate change is goal 13; supporting open societies is goal 16; and helping the poorest around the world—sometimes I refer to the Paul Collier phrase “the bottom billion”—is goal 1. The internal and the outward-facing KPIs and strategic objectives we have framed have always taken the SDGs as an anchor. The combination of COP 26, the presidency of the UN Security Council and the presidency of the G7 allows us to galvanise each of those areas.

With a strategy you always have to have a focus, but it is fair to say that international public health, climate change and galvanising trade so we can grow back and recover, in a better, greener and more sustainable way, are among the very top priorities.

Q12 **Theo Clarke:** You mentioned climate change. SDG 13 is to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. I know you visited Kenya earlier this month and raised climate change with the President. Given that climate change is such a global issue, I would be interested to hear your plans as Foreign Secretary to tackle climate change. How are you going to ensure that Britain continues to lead globally in implementing SDG 13?

Dominic Raab: We have Alok Sharma full time on COP 26 now. There is not a telephone call I make to Foreign Ministers around the world, or a meeting I have, where climate change is not raised. There is a combination of things here. We had the December climate ambition summit, where 75 leaders came together. We used that to up their level of ambition. We had 45 strengthened NDCs, 24 net zero commitments and 26 countries upping their game on adaptation and resilience.

In my view, we need to create a virtuous cycle and momentum. The US coming back to the Paris agreement is really important. When South Korea, Japan and, in fairness, China made recent emission targets commitments, it allowed me in those calls to say, “These countries are moving, so you need to as well”. I thought India’s Climate Ambition summit commitments were also pretty interesting. There is starting to be that sense of a virtuous cycle and momentum.

The way I tend to operate is to work back from November. I think, “What does a successful communiqué in November at the end of COP 26 look



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like?" Then I make sure that we have the milestones littering the roadmap back from that and are doing everything we can. I am working hand in glove with Alok.

There are two particular things we need if we are going to shift the dial on climate change. One is a groundswell of extra ambition on the nationally determined contributions. We also need to make sure that this is an inclusive process and developing countries are bought into it. A lot of hectoring goes on from some in the campaigning community. I understand why, and that is fine, but we are brokers. On article 6, on adaptation and on climate finance, we need to show that we are bringing in all of those who will think that the so-called West or the most developed countries need to bear the brunt. This will need to be a global team effort.

I hope that gives you a sense of the strategy but also the teamwork that is going on within Government. I probably spend more time on this than any other single issue at the moment, certainly multilaterally.

Q13 Theo Clarke: You talked about embedding the SDGs into your Department's work, but how are you going to assess and measure how well this is working?

Dominic Raab: We have six-monthly and 12-monthly KPIs. When we merged, I reduced the overall number of DGs because I did not want to create a Frankenstein's monster, which is often what happens when you have a merger. I started off life as a competition lawyer in the City. I saw a lot of mergers that did not increase productivity. Overall, we have trimmed the number of DGs and the number of directors.

One of the things I brought in was a DG delivery. I tasked that person and his team to make sure that we have KPIs and are getting the right balance, with a strategic focus that is locked into the global commitments we have made and our strategic priorities, but flexibly enough that we do not skew delivery, which is sometimes what you can get with too many targets. We are doing that and we are basically trying to mainstream that now across Whitehall as well.

Q14 Mr Sharma: Internationally, the British Government's commitment on combating violence against women and girls is recognised and appreciated. In 2018, just 0.3% of UK aid was spent on combating violence against women and girls. Does the FCDO intend to increase spending in this area? How does it intend to make its work in this area more impactful?

Dominic Raab: Thank you, Virendra. It is good to see you. It does not seem that long ago that we were sat on the Joint Committee on Human Rights scrutinising the coalition.

PSVI is still a major priority for the Government, as is girls' education. In fact, girls' education and PSVI will be part of our G7 presidency priorities and, indeed, part of the work we do in our presidency of the UN Security



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Council. It is the financial allocations that matter, and of course we will continue to support that work in a shrunken financial envelope.

One particular thing I am looking at is the accountability piece and how, with the range of international actors, the ICC and various other bodies, the UK can buttress and support accountability for serious international crimes, war crimes and others, given that we have quite a level of expertise in this area. A major piece of that work will be PSVI.

In a sense, I want to look at where there is some nascent capability, whether it is bilateral or through the ICC or some other institution, and then look to add value to it. Starting from scratch is often where the need is the greatest, but the impact you have is difficult to get off the ground. I want to look at adding value where international actors already have access and being a force multiplier in those areas.

We have great investigative capabilities, not just domestically but internationally. We just got Joanna Korner elected to the International Criminal Court. I worked with and knew Jo Korner when I was in The Hague between 2003 and 2006. We have a credible domestic capacity when it comes to war crimes on the forensic front, the investigative front and the legal front. That is a good area where we can add some value. I do not want to duplicate initiatives that are already underway, but we are setting up a bespoke team in the Foreign Office to look at our comparative advantage in dispute resolution and conflict management. One aspect of that will be accountability for injustice and war crimes. A core element of that will be PSVI.

Q15 Mr Sharma: I am thankful to you for remembering those very interesting days on the Joint Committee on Human Rights. Thank you very much for reminding me.

What plans does the FCDO have to adopt and use the Department for International Development's strategic vision for gender equality?

Dominic Raab: In a way, we have gone past that level. By the way, my Permanent Secretary has done a fantastic job, as have all my DGs, in making this merger happen—not just in the technical way that the DGs and most of the directors have now been appointed, but in the work we are doing with the teams below that and in the culture and ethos of the new FCDO. We are trying to stop talking about the old DFID and Foreign Office functions, and to have something that is innovative and maybe even slightly different.

I never tire of telling the former Foreign Office folk that there is a lot to be learned from the project management skills the aid experts bring, which will be important, obviously on the development front, but for all the work we do in FCDO. I am trying to pioneer something a bit different and innovative rather than just crunching two bits of Whitehall together.

On gender equality, there are two global KPIs that we are working to and that we want to use the G7 presidency to push. The first is to get 14



million more girls in school for 12 years of quality education. The second is to get a third more girls, which is 20 million, reading by the age of 10 in developing countries. That is a five-year KPI from 2020 to 2025. It includes a whole range of work. When I was out in Addis, I went to one of the schools we are funding and saw its great work. It is incredible life-changing work, not just for the individuals affected, but for the ability of that country to tap its full social talent and social capital in an economic way, as well as in the cohesiveness of the society.

With coronavirus, we have a big challenge. My fear is that the girls who have gone out of education because of Covid will not go back into education. We have a back-to-school campaign for girls with 300,000 girls benefiting from catch-up programmes directly supported by UK aid. The set piece event that we will have this year will be the global education summit, which we will co-host in summer with the Kenyans. When I was out in Kenya, it was a good opportunity to talk about that with President Kenyatta and the other relevant Ministers.

Chair: Foreign Secretary, it is great that you mentioned PSVI, but I would urge you to embed the strategic vision for gender equality across all the work. I remember being in Uganda and my driver saying, "Yes, there are schools, but the girls are getting raped on the way to school". Unless you tackle this gender inequality problem, whatever focus we have on schools is not going to pay off. Could I bring in Pauline Latham, who has long championed gender equality in the development sector?

Q16 **Mrs Latham:** As the Secretary of State will be aware, I have been involved with all the reports that have come out of the Committee on sexual exploitation and abuse. We have just brought out a recent one where we found that sexual exploitation and abuse is endemic in the aid sector. It is usually men in hierarchical positions who take advantage of so many vulnerable women.

Could you tell us what actions you and the FCDO will take to hold your partners to account, if they fail to introduce effective measures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse in their organisations? It is there in some, but not in all of them.

Dominic Raab: Thank you, Pauline. Some of those reports were terrible. Let me set out what our approach is. Can I also say, Madam Chair, that I totally take on board your challenge? One of the things around girls' education, before we move off it, is the wraparound. Some girls cannot get to school because they are being abused at home. Another is sanitary conditions, particularly for young teenage girls. We are looking at that in the round. In fact, in Addis, there was a particular hub on sanitary conditions, basically tampons and things like that, to make sure that young teenage girls have no reason not to feel confident in going to school and getting the learning we all want to see.

On your point, Pauline, we have a zero-tolerance approach. I feel that personally, and we need to embed that. I think we have. In terms of our



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baseline, the 2020 DAC review praised the UK's international leadership on safeguarding. We are not remotely complacent for a second. We have demonstrated decent performance, but we can never let our eye off the ball.

There is increased risk because of Covid. We have seen domestic abuse rise in the UK, but the risk of abuse of girls, sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation is more expanded in developing countries. We need to root it out. The flip side of the Covid situation is that it has become harder to report it, harder to investigate it and harder to bring people to account. There is a challenge. Let us have our eyes wide open about that.

What have we done about it? In September, we published our first strategy on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, setting out action for all ODA spend. That is a guide, and it built on the work of the 2018 London safeguarding summit. One of the initiatives we are backing, to get to a slightly more granular level, is to prevent anyone who is responsible for sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse from being employed in the aid sector.

There is a misconduct disclosure scheme, which has led to 36 people with a track record of safeguarding misconduct not being offered jobs in NGOs in 2019. We will get the figures for 2020 in March. Let us see the progress we have made, but that accountability has been mainstreamed. We hold ourselves in the FCDO to the same high standards. We have a staff code of conduct, which is categorical about this kind of behaviour.

I want to do a new stream of work, which we will announce early this year, to tackle some of the most significant barriers that victims, and even in some cases survivors, face to getting the support and accountability they need. I hope that gives you a flavour, both at the strategic level and of the programming work we are doing in this area.

Q17 Chair: There is one small thing you could do to help us, which would really help the sector. Foreign aid workers are not eligible to apply for DBS checks. It is something that Government could issue guidance on. Would you help us in our campaign to get the guidance expanded so that aid workers could be covered by that?

Dominic Raab: Will you write to me? I promise I will look at that very closely myself.

Chair: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Q18 Theo Clarke: The UK's multiyear commitment to nutrition-related programmes expired back in December 2020. Are the Government waiting for the nutrition for growth summit in December this year to unveil them?

Dominic Raab: No, we are doing a huge amount in the area of famine and nutrition. It came up when I was out in Sudan; towards the Tigray region of Ethiopia it is a very live issue. We are doing a huge amount in



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that area. Let me check and write back to the Committee on the particular publication you have referred to. I will use your contribution here as an impetus to drive that forward.

Q19 Theo Clarke: It would be helpful if you could include whether the delay over the last year will jeopardise food security in developing countries and how the Government plan to respond to tackling hunger due to the delay.

Dominic Raab: I will write back to you in detail on that, but, as I mentioned before, we are particularly concerned about the prospect of famine and the triple-whammy of famine, conflict and Covid. From Sudan through to Yemen and Burkina Faso, you can see that risk. Sometimes it is regional within countries. North-east Nigeria is an area of particular concern.

In 2020, back in September, I launched the UK's global call to action. As part of the £100 million we put in and Nick Dyer's appointment as special envoy, we have tried to galvanise this and make a renewed effort to tackle famine and food insecurity. Effectively, we have 7 million vulnerable people in our sights to provide extra support to. I can reassure you that this is not suffering, but let me come back to you on the malnutrition point.

Q20 Mrs Latham: On that point about nutrition, will the cut to the aid budget affect the level of support for nutrition going forward? If so, what assessment has the Secretary of State made of this cut?

Dominic Raab: As I said, we have set out our priorities. All the famine-related work, through both the humanitarian priorities and a number of the other ones, will be safeguarded. The way I look at it, famine alleviation, along with the work we do on international public health, TB, AIDS, malaria and Covid, and climate change, is one of the two or three top priorities. Those are not the sorts of things that, where there is an effective programme, we are looking to pare back.

The truth is that I have to find cuts somewhere. One reason why we set out our list of priorities is to make sure that, on the most acute suffering—including famine, but there is other humanitarian suffering—we safeguard those funds as much as possible. Effectively, where there is a high-impact programme in place, they will be protected.

Q21 Kate Osamor: I would like to welcome the Foreign Secretary. We have been looking forward to questioning you, so it is great to see you here. My question is on the secondary impacts of Covid-19. There are huge concerns that the secondary impacts of Covid-19 and other diseases on the economies of developing countries, their livelihoods, food security and the wellbeing of women and girls, are likely to be much more severe than the virus itself.

What assessments have you undertaken about the investment of previous development gains being lost or reversed by the direct and



indirect impacts of the pandemic?

Dominic Raab: That is a really good point. Funnily enough, to some extent there is an element of relief. If you look at how we viewed the pandemic playing out in Africa, to give one example, we have been surprised in one sense. Because of the younger populations, they have not been hit as badly in terms of numbers, transmission and, above all, serious illness and death.

Our original worry was that the healthcare systems would not be able to cope. By and large, that fear has not quite been borne out to the same degree. On the other hand, the knock-on impacts on the economy—and, as a result, debt—have been particularly acute. When I was in Sudan, we talked to Prime Minister Hamdok about the commitment I made when I was there, which I announced publicly, to work with them to help on their debt relief both in the multilateral fora, the IMF and elsewhere, and in the African Development Bank.

You are absolutely right. You have nailed it. Economically recovering while you have this debt piling up has always been a challenge for the poorest countries. That is a secondary impact that has become even more acute. I have talked about it with the head of the World Bank, David Malpass, with the UN Secretary-General and with countries like Sudan. We have to do what we can.

Q22 **Kate Osamor:** When you say that you have spoken to the banks, are you advocating that the debt should be cancelled?

Dominic Raab: There are different ways to do it. We need to engage, but there are things like how you deal with the arrears. There is a combination of the multilateral and the bilateral piece. I cannot give you the details of it now.

What I am very happy to share with you, because it is a really important issue, is that it has to be part of the conversation about recovering and building back better and stronger. Some of those countries just do not have a chance without that. We can talk about trade. I am a big fan of trading your way to middle-income status and all the rest of it, but you need a bedrock level of economic capacity, which you will not have if you are in a debt trap. It is very difficult.

Q23 **Kate Osamor:** I want to move on to the Committee's interim report on Covid-19. We recommended that the Government should publish a multiyear cross-departmental global health strategy to set out their work and goals. We have not received a clear response to this recommendation. Are you going to develop and publish a comprehensive strategy? Can we hope that it is being worked on, as it has not been delivered to us yet?

Dominic Raab: We will work on it and we will respond to the Committee's recommendations. I have looked at it. You raised some really good points. I want to look at it and come back to you definitively.



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Put it this way: it is because you have stimulated a lot of thought and interest that we are taking our time to come back in hopefully as considered a way as possible. I am trying to flatter my way out of this.

Q24 **Kate Osamor:** We look forward to it, but, as you can well imagine, we will be on your back waiting for it.

Dominic Raab: I expect nothing less.

Chair: Thank you, Foreign Secretary. Flattery does usually work.

Q25 **Mrs Latham:** How did you decide on the areas for the seven global challenges that you have talked about? Why were these priority areas selected? Is there any hierarchy within these challenges?

Dominic Raab: It was more inductive than deductive. We looked at them; we had lobbying from the different Departments in the usual Whitehall way. In both the IR and the SR, one of the advantages of FCDO now being in the cockpit of this is that we can look at it in the round. That is definitely an advantage of the merger. I appreciate that there are different views on this, but you will expect me to talk up the positives, and that is one of them. Ultimately, we have chosen them as the things that really matter. I would view it in strategic terms. That is why, when the IR comes out, you will see this borne out.

On development, aid and that piece of the work we do, we should unabashedly be proud of and confident about our heart and soul commitment, and our moral responsibility, to make the world a better place. That is why I talk about being a force for good so much. At the same time, I see a range of grittier strategic UK national interests in dealing with issues from climate change to humanitarian suffering and trade.

As Paul Collier and Stefan Dercon, progressive development economists, have written about, for a relationship to be sustainable you need to have an element of both sides gaining and both sides pushing at it. While we are glad to be beyond the days of strict aid conditionality, I look at the priorities we have and think, "What is in the British national interest?" as well as asking, "What is our responsibility to make the world a better place and to be a force for good?"

It is a combination of the process of assessing all those different factors, coupled with getting the right balance with the here and now. Clearly, climate change and health were going to be on our list of seven, along with making sure we have the longer-term piece around trade. The UK and global Britain's USP is—I have talked about this quite a lot—that we have a real role to play as a dispute-resolving nation. If you look at the countries that do this well, you have Norway, Switzerland and various other countries that are particularly effective.

We do things in a different way, through a combination of being an aid superpower, our diplomatic network, our military capacities, the fact that



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London is a centre for dispute resolution, as are other cities around the UK, including Edinburgh, and our financial services and legal expertise. We bring all of those together. We have a really strong comparative advantage in trying to resolve disputes, trying to support the settlement of this conflict in Yemen and trying to support the UN process on Cyprus. I want us to do a bit more of that, and be a bit more energetic and a bit more proactive about doing it. The ODA piece feeds into that as well.

That is the pen picture of them, but tell me if you think either that any of my list should not be on there or that there is something that should be on it. Of course, in relation to the 0.7% or 0.5% piece, all the priorities are with a view, in the development realm, to poverty reduction as well. That is the umbrella.

Q26 Mrs Latham: I am also going to ask how those priorities fit in with the needs of the poorest and the most vulnerable in the developing world. Do you have any areas of spending in these seven global challenges that you intend to ring-fence? If so, what are they?

Dominic Raab: I am not wild about ring-fences because they skew your ability to respond, but we have some cross-Government ring-fences around international climate finance and R&D. I would rather be strategically driven. Yes, targets are a part of that, but I am just a bit reticent about ring-fences.

In fact, other than the ones where we are legally obliged, one of the things we have done at FCDO with the Treasury is to remove the ring-fences. Let me give you an example of something we have removed for this year. I would genuinely be interested in the Committee's view on this. I think we spend too much on external consultants, and I do not think we have enough in-house capacity in the way the Germans do to run projects, not just evaluate them.

If you look at why that decision was made when DFID was first set up, it was to prevent an inflation of civil servants in the newly founded Department. There is a limit on total operating costs, the TOCs limit, which you will be familiar with. It applied to DFID but no other Government Department. As well as trying to streamline the merged Department in the way we have described—we have done that on DGs and directors, and we are working below that level—we have relinquished the TOCs limit, so we can bring more capability in house, run more projects and build up our capacity in that area.

In the short term, that will cost us some money. We have to find some investment for that. In the medium to long term, we will stop spending so much money on expensive consultants. That is a smart move, and it is totally apolitical. It is a sensible way to go. Germany is one of the few countries that still keep separate aid and foreign affairs Ministries. Most of the OECD countries have shifted the way we have gone. That is the zeitgeist. One of the things they do very well is that in-house capability, and one of the reasons they have not merged is that they are actually



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very well integrated, in the way you see in other areas of German policymaking.

That is something we have tried to learn from. I am open-minded. Pauline, you might tell me that there is some ring-fence that I should be committing to, but they tend to reflect lobbies—and lobbies can be very well intended—rather than, if you take a strategic view, the best approach to deliver bang for our buck and high impact.

Q27 Mrs Latham: You have addressed the ring-fencing, but you have not actually addressed how your priority areas will fit with the needs of the poorest and the most vulnerable in the developing world. Could you, at the same time, comment on why an explicit commitment to poverty reduction is missing from your framework?

Dominic Raab: On the latter point, the whole framework is driven towards poverty reduction. That is what the DAC rules require. There is an interesting conversation multilaterally about pressing the DAC rules, for example, on UN peacekeeping, but we have not walked away from that. We are bound by that. We remain committed to it.

If you look at the priorities of more competitive economies driven by a more liberal approach to free trade, harnessing tech and science, that is important for the least developing countries, not only in getting their exports up, but in improving their capability and capacity to engage in business and trade deals. The tech piece, from trade to public health, is one of the most important things that the UK should do more of and externalise in our foreign policy.

Funnily enough, in the debate on 5G and supply chains generally, there is a real case on the tech, data and digital side of things—it is something I know Liz Truss is exceptionally committed to—for trying to boost the work we do with the poorest countries. On the stuff around Covid-19 and vaccines, the PM did an amazing job with the Gavi summit: we raised close to \$9 billion. Through the COVAX AMC, we have committed something around £500 million to get a billion doses to the neediest countries around the world. That is directly driving the humanitarian and poverty reduction goals that your Committee and my Department are focused on.

Q28 Mrs Latham: You have mentioned several times the bottom billion, who are very important. You have talked about poorer countries but not so much about the poorest people. The bottom billion were a priority prior to your cuts in the autumn. Has that changed? If so, why has that changed?

Dominic Raab: No, it has not changed. You also have countries with high levels of inequality and, therefore, they suffer acute poverty, but they have burgeoning economies and are middle-income countries. We want to work with them. In those areas, our focus will be more on trade than traditional poverty-alleviating ODA. In those countries that are the



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very poorest, you cannot get away from the debt relief and humanitarian goals we have, particularly if they are conflict or post-conflict countries.

We have not stepped away at all. I hope that the seven strategic and SR priorities articulate how we are going to do it. When I start to look at it on a programme-by-programme basis, which is what we are doing now, that will become more clearly illustrated.

Chair: One of my concerns with the phrase “the bottom billion” is that, because of the secondary impacts of Covid-19, it is expected that another 500 million people are likely to go into poverty. That is why this Committee is focused on poverty reduction rather than capping it at a certain level.

You asked whether we have any other priorities. We could come up with an encyclopaedia, but the one I would be personally pushing is the reduction, if not the elimination, of gender-based violence, which underpins a lot, if not all, of the work that we ought to be doing in the development sector.

I am very sure the Committee would like to write back to you with our thoughts on consultants. Watching the screens, half the Committee gave you a thumbs-up and half of them were shaking their heads. My first thought on that was how you prevent the risks being shifted on to Her Majesty’s Government if you move too far away from consultants, but I understand your concerns.

Q29 Navendu Mishra: Welcome to the Select Committee, Foreign Secretary. The members have been really keen to get you to this meeting for a long while, so I am glad you have finally made it. Regarding aid, trade and security, the new strategic framework stipulates that ODA can be spent only where economic, security and development interests are aligned. What does this mean in practice for programmes currently operating in countries that meet only one or two of these new requirements?

Dominic Raab: I am not quite sure which paper you are citing from, but the answer is to align the key priorities. If you are going to have a strategy and you are going to focus, you cannot expect to tick every box. As I said, it is not a box-ticking exercise. It is part art and part science.

If you want to have a genuinely coherent strategy, particularly with a reduced financial envelope, it does help to have some focus to it. These are principles and indicators to guide us; they are not sent out as strict edicts. They are focusing strategy, resource and political energy.

Q30 Navendu Mishra: I take your point about focus. What does that mean in practice for programmes that are currently facing cuts? How does this relate to countries that have strategic interests more aligned with British Government interests and countries that may not fall in that parameter?

Dominic Raab: If there are programmes that do not match with those priorities and countries that we need to spend more or less time in, we



will use it as a guide. It is not so prescriptive that, if there is some pressing need that the strategic framework does not capture, we do not have the leeway or the flexibility to address it.

As I said, it is an inductive process, rather than a deductive one from a Cartesian-like theory. We have had to make lots of difficult decisions. We did it with the GNI review in 2020; we have had to do it with the shift from 0.7% to 0.5%. None of these has been easy, but I have to say that having the strategic framework has guided us. When we have made decisions, certainly in my mind, they have been very clear ones, because we have known the positive things we want to protect.

It is easier, I have found, when we look at the specific projects, to articulate that rather than just looking at it in the abstract. As I said, I want to signal, both to the Department and to our stakeholders internationally and publicly in this country, what we are saying are our priorities. In fact, even if we had not had the shift to 0.5%, I would still have done this. You are still trying to marshal your resources in the most impactful way possible.

Q31 Navendu Mishra: On the point of specific projects, you may have seen reports over the weekend in the *Times* newspaper condemning investments by CDC Group, the Commonwealth Development Corporation Group, in unaffordable private healthcare, gym chains, industrial agriculture and fossil fuel infrastructure. With so many aid programmes facing disastrous cuts this year, have you considered withholding the £779 million investment scheduled to be transferred to CDC Group this spring until CDC Group can demonstrate better impact for its money? Do you agree that these investments should be focused on tackling poverty and fighting disease rather than investing in unaffordable healthcare and private gym chains?

Dominic Raab: I read the various *Times* reports. I am afraid the short answer is no to both your questions. No, I do not agree with that analysis. Let me try to explain why, though; forgive me for setting it out. The rationale of the CDC is to deal with investments that are made where there is a market failure, in the private sector rather than just Government to Government. Government-to-Government aid has its place and Government-to-NGO aid has its place, but there will be points and clearly a sweet spot where you also want to also galvanise private sector activity.

CDC has a role where there is market failure, an opportunity to leverage the private sector and a positive social impact. Far from being less relevant, I think the CDC is more relevant. Maybe the tools will need to be adjusted in a different way, but it has a huge role to play. It invests in places where other investors will not go. For example, CDC has 15 million invested in businesses in the DRC. It has mobilised £1.5 billion of private sector investment over the last three years. It has a strong poverty impact focus and a social impact focus, and it works in Africa and Asia.



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I looked at each of the examples in the *Times*. Given the high risk level and the market failure I have described, there will of course be cases where the CDC invests and there is not the kind of return that you would normally get. On the other hand, I can give you examples where the CDC's role is absolutely invaluable.

With the Chair's forbearance, I would just like to give you three. Tackling the rural energy challenge is a massive issue if you care about the social and economic impact of poverty. Greenlight Planet is providing solar home systems on a pay-as-you-go basis to close to 10 million people in Kenya, where I have just come back from, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria. That is one example and it is done on an affordable basis.

Another one is internet access. Let me give you a concrete example. The CDC has backed Liquid Telecom to expand its network of fiberoptic cables in the DRC. The thread of cables would travel from London to—

Q32 Navendu Mishra: Foreign Secretary, I hope you will forgive me. I fully take the point that CDC Group does some really good work; I am not disputing that. I am specifically asking you about these investments that have been highlighted in the *Times* report. In light of the global pandemic we are in, is it appropriate to be investing in private healthcare using UK aid money when we should be investing in strong public health systems that benefit the majority of people rather than perhaps people who have the biggest pockets?

Dominic Raab: Navendu, the third example that I will come on to give is affordable medicines. Do not get me wrong: there will be examples, as I said, of investments that do not provide a return. On your basic proposition, what I am saying to you very candidly is that I fundamentally disagree, if the idea is that the CDC is a failed or warped tool. Let me give you one example in the—

Q33 Chair: That is not what Navendu was intimating. We understand the spread. It would be really helpful, because the Committee is very interested in the work of CDC, if you could provide us the ethical framework that you are asking them to invest on so we can understand the position and the benefits more closely in the future.

As a sweetener and a flattery to you, we are more than happy to have the third example.

Dominic Raab: I will write back to you, particularly when you ask so nicely, Madam Chair. If you look at MedAccess, it provides and reduces the cost of mosquito nets by an average of something like 40%. This is for malaria. The impact that has in places like Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire shows you that it can have very high impact.

Navendu, I do not want this to be a confrontational thing. I can pick up on the examples in the *Times*, but every time I see this I go back and check. I will write to you about the framework and how we set the mandate. If you send to me any of the examples from the *Times* that you



are particularly concerned about, having done the due diligence already, I will write back to you on those as well.

Navendu Mishra: I appreciate that. I was not suggesting that CDC is a failed experiment or that it should be scrapped; I was just questioning some of the UK aid investments that it has made.

Q34 **Mr Bacon:** Foreign Secretary, can I first say thank you very much for coming? There was some discussion about what would happen once the merger took place, and I have been delighted by your level of engagement, your knowledge, your obvious commitment to international aid and everything you have said about the strategic framework.

If you think I am trying to flatter you, of course I am. You travel round the world, meeting Prime Ministers, princes and all kinds of people. Disraeli said, "Everyone likes flattery; and when you come to royalty, you should lay it on with a trowel". I want to know whether you have ever had occasion to put this into practice.

Dominic Raab: I do not want to reveal all my darkest secrets to your Committee; you are probably more expert at prising information and what you want out of your interviewees than I am. As the proud Brexit-supporting global Britain patriots that I know, aside from the political views, we all are—the patriot bit, not the Brexit bit—it is important to look at it from the other person's point of view. That is the bread and butter of negotiation and diplomacy.

I had conversations in Sudan with Lieutenant General Al-Burhan, the chairman of the Sovereignty Council. I saw Prime Minister Abiy in Ethiopia, given the situation in Tigray. I talk to our Brazilian friends about deforestation. There is a high premium in understanding where they are coming from and avoiding the caricature of a hectoring neo-imperial Britain. That does not mean you do not deliver difficult, candid messages, but it is important to understand how it looks from the other side.

One of the interesting things—there are all sorts of foreign policy implications of this—is that, whether it is dealing with Iran or China on the positive angle or on the challenging side of things, there is a real scope to break down some of the divisions between the so-called West and the old G77. In order to do that, we are going to have to think a little more through the eyes of others.

India is a good example. I can see a strong case for a reinforced strategic partnership with India. The Prime Minister wanted to go for Republic Day, but he hopes to go shortly. That is a very good example, not just in the areas of trade and military or security co-operation, but in terms of understanding, in the UN, where India is on the strategic football pitch, even if we are not necessarily aligned.

I can see other countries around the world where that is the case. The foreign policy piece now is going to be much less in blocs and more clusters of like-minded coalitions and groups. For example, in Seoul,



South Korea, I had an excellent meeting in 2020 with Foreign Minister Kang, who has just been reshuffled, unfortunately, in the sense that I had got to know her. I am sure her successor will be very good. South Korea has the most similar voting record in the UN and other international organisations to the UK. How many people would know that, even people interested in foreign affairs?

We need to be a bit more subtle, agile and nimble. To directly answer your question, that starts with a better understanding of how it looks from their vantage point, which we need to embrace. Perhaps most importantly, that needs to happen in the future with the kind of actors in Asia, Africa and Latin America that perhaps we have not invested as much in.

Partly I see that as part of global Britain, and I feel we have been a bit too insular within the European Union. The EU is quite an inward-looking organisation, at least in some respects, because of the challenges it has. Whatever your views on that, the situation we find ourselves in now, with the need to forge different kinds of clusters of likeminded coalitions, is an opportunity as well as a challenge, but you have to look at what the other side needs and wants, not just on a transactional basis.

I went to east Africa last week, where there is a clear USP for the UK. We are more liberal and free-trading than many European countries and many others around the world. Our private sector firms do business with greater integrity, I would say, than the Russians and the Chinese, and we have a force for good agenda from aid to coronavirus and COVAX AMC that is unrivalled. You have to understand how that lands with each of those different countries, but it is very appealing.

When people talk to me—members of the Committee have raised this and I get the politics of it—about our reputation abroad, it is absolutely stellar. We are hugely valued, and the scope to magnify that and increase our impact is not limitless but is enormous, as long as we understand it from the other side's point of view.

Q35 Mr Bacon: Thank you very much for that extremely interesting, in-depth answer, which was really just because of your quip about flattery earlier. It is a very interesting answer. I agree with you about Africa. I have worked in east Africa, west Africa and southern Africa. Our reputation is very high there. I also chair the APPG on Iran, and everything you said about seeing things from the other party's point of view chimed heavily with me.

I would like to come on to UK aid shifting to a bilateral focus for delivery. With all that, there must be some fear or some risk that previously agreed multilateral spending commitments will be under threat. Will they continue or not?

Dominic Raab: All the commitments we have made legally remain. Within the multilateral sphere, sometimes you end up reprofiling anyway



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because of the nature of the programmes, but we have not pulled out of anything that breaches our legal or formal commitments. We have tried to honour our commitments on those things, for all the reputational reasons that members of the Committee will understand.

There is a very interesting piece—I do not know whether your Committee has a view on this—on the balance between multilateral and bilateral, particularly when it comes to aid programmes. In one sense, the classic accountant's bean-counting view is that the multilateral gives us economies of scale and accountability. On the other hand, if you want to focus and have control of where your money goes, the bilateral piece is important too.

I have come out of this rather untheological about it and more practical and pragmatic. They have different impacts in different places. It depends on what our strategic priorities are. We have some that are esoteric in the sense that they are additional or supplementary to what the multilaterals are doing. I would be fascinated by your view. I do not have the specific numbers, but I can write to the Committee if it is helpful.

We looked very carefully at the geographic spread of what we were doing as we shifted from the GNI review last year and the 0.7% to 0.5%. We looked at the multilateral-bilateral balance, but I would be quite interested to know whether the Committee has a view as to whether we should do more or less in either of those two spheres.

Q36 Mr Bacon: I cannot tell you the Committee's view as a whole, but I sat for 16 years on the Public Accounts Committee before joining this Committee. I remember Suma Chakrabarti, when he was Permanent Secretary of DFID, acknowledging that the multilateral spend we sent through the European Union was less well focused and controlled from the point of view of our own taxpayers, but there was nothing we could do about it. I am not theological about it either. There must be obvious cases where multilateral spending makes more sense.

This is now complicated by the new American presidency, because President Biden has indicated that the US will re-engage with multilateral organisations such as the World Health Organization. What impact do you think that is going to have on global development and on the UK's role in global development?

Dominic Raab: On your earlier point, a good example is public health. Whether it is coronavirus, tuberculosis or polio, it has proved much easier in the multilateral sphere to get high levels of value added. That is partly because health outcomes are more obviously measurable than some other areas.

From talking to some of the leading players in the field, I know they are more sceptical about educational development outcomes only because they are harder to measure. That is something where the bilateral



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approach, or a combination of multilateral and bilateral, is probably in order, because we do think it is worthwhile and it can be measured, albeit not in quite the same metric-oriented way that health outcomes are.

In terms of what the new Biden Administration are doing, it is early days. Subject to a confirmation that we are expecting today, I am due to speak to Secretary of State Blinken and the aid agency, which I saw last time I was in Washington. I have spoken twice to Jake Sullivan on the security side of things.

If you look at what they are doing, coming back into the WHO and the Paris agreement, it is very powerful for the multilateral co-operation that we need to see. It does not matter whether you are a China hawk or a development enthusiast. Having the US re-engage in the WHO is incredibly important. Even if you take the most realist view of things, you leave a vacuum that China will exploit or fill. If you look at, for example, the World Intellectual Property Organization, we all teamed up and worked together on an issue that we are very concerned about in relation to Chinese IP theft, and the international community was very effective at securing an excellent Singaporean candidate.

In all of these areas, including the multilateral “force for good” type of stuff around COVAX, vaccines and climate change, it is incredibly important to have the US there. I am not suggesting for a moment that the tensions and challenges will go away, but having the US inside the multilateral tent is a real force multiplier. Frankly, it fits more neatly within the way we see the world and the Government policies we are pursuing. We believe in multilateralism. We do not think the institutions are perfect. The WHO needs reform, as do the UN and many other institutions.

Take the ICC. We worked really hard to get Jo Korner elected. People were questioning whether we would get that candidacy through. Partly because it is a top-drawer international judge with all the right experience, she was voted in on the first round—the only judge elected on the first round. She got the second highest vote tally in history in the ICC.

The ICC is not a perfect institution. We want to reform it, but the answer is to send them your best people who will do the job with the judicial discipline and rigour that you want. That is our view of multilateralism. Having the Americans inside some of those tents, notwithstanding the tensions and the challenges that will not go away, is very powerful.

Q37 Mr Bacon: I have one more question on the CDC, because the Public Accounts Committee took evidence on this and published a report in April 2009. I am a fan of the CDC and what it does. It does some great work; I completely agree with you. It is certainly true that it had some problems in the early 2000s and was restructured by DFID in 2004. Even five years after that, there were still some serious issues. There have been big changes since.



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May I invite you to get your team to look at that report from 2009, compare and contrast with the situation now, and see what more can be done and what more can be learned? While there has been improvement, there is plainly room for further improvement.

Dominic Raab: That is an excellent point. Lots of the investments I see advertised by the *Times* were initiated under the last Government. It is a bit late in the day for us to be constantly leaning on that, but some of those investments are long-term investments. That is really the point I was making. I am not saying it is perfect. I would just say, because it is coming under scrutiny, that it occupies an area. It is a tool. If we did not have it, we would really be missing an area of focus and value added.

Mr Bacon: I completely agree.

Dominic Raab: Let us get it right, but not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Q38 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, could I bring you back to a phrase you used when we were talking about the cuts? You said we would honour our legal commitments. Could you speak a bit about whether that means, when the cuts are falling, they are more likely to go to grants than contracts, and more likely to go on short-term investments than multi-year investments?

Dominic Raab: It is a good point. Forgive me for leaving the details to be published in the usual way via the Government mechanism. It is true to say that, with most of the longer-term commitments, there are normally break clauses, review clauses and the like. They are not bereft of flexibility. The hard insistence that I agreed with the Chancellor was that we are not going to break the law. We are not going to break clear commitments we have recently made, for reputational reasons. I am sure I can write to you on the volume covered by that.

We looked at how much we just have to spend. A lot of that is high-priority stuff, so we should not worry too much that we are being legally hedged into a corner on stuff we would not want to. I can certainly write to you, because this is one of the things I looked at immediately. What is the mandatory stuff? For example, asylum costs and some of the areas around that are just not something we can shift away. We just have to retain the Home Office's costs in that area. We would not want to anyway, but that is a good example. There is a series of legal commitments that we have made.

I can write to you and, if there is a particular area you are concerned about, I can follow up. At the end of it, we did not feel the legal commitments and requirements had skewed the strategic focus we wanted to keep, but, of course, we wanted to adhere to it for obvious reasons.

Q39 **Chair:** You mentioned asylum, but that goes into the 6.5% that the Home Office is bidding into. I am more concerned with the bigger amount



that you have authority over, because the local delivery, the NGO money, tends to be grants rather than contracts. That is where my nervousness is: that the people actually on the ground delivering directly might fall foul of these cuts.

Dominic Raab: I get it.

Chair: If you could give us the breakdown, that would be fantastic.

Dominic Raab: Let me see what I can send you on that.

Q40 **Mrs Latham:** I know, Foreign Secretary, that you are a man of great detail and you like to drill down to see what the numbers are doing. You have a huge budget, but it is also going into 12 other Departments. How are you going to keep an eye on that? How are you going to know that they are following your priorities strictly? How are you going to know that the outcomes are there? There have been and continue to be budget cuts. Are they the same through each Department? The Departments are spending between £3 million and £706 million each. Has one Department been disproportionately affected?

Dominic Raab: It is a very good question. The WMS that we published today will give you the figures. You can look at it yourself.

Q41 **Mrs Latham:** Obviously there have been cuts, probably to all of those, but has it been across the board a percentage cut, or has any one Department been disproportionately affected by the cuts? I can see what we are going to spend now, going forward.

Dominic Raab: No, there has been no percentage applied across the board, precisely because I did not want to salami slice. I wanted to focus with a smaller financial envelope on where we can address our priorities in the way that delivers highest impact.

The reassurance I can give you is around the process, which we conducted both for the GNI 0.7% review and for the shift to 0.5% and the allocations, which we have published today, which was effectively against the priorities that we have sent round. We have used the strategic priorities as a tool across Whitehall, not just a public articulation of what we are focusing on. They were sent and we asked the Departments to bid against them.

I chaired a Star Chamber-type process that got them bidding against the priorities. We had, as you would imagine, some back and forth. Then we looked at it at the end, strategically, in the round, Department by Department, thematically, geographically and, most of all, against our strategic priorities. Then the Treasury and the Prime Minister signed off on it. The reassurance I would give you is that this is now a much more strategically driven process, albeit to make financial savings, than a financially driven process. If you have a smaller financial envelope, that is the way to go. That is now becoming the permanent way we will do this.



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The net win is that strategy drives the financial allocations. When it comes to the bids we get next year, we will be measuring very carefully, with all the advantages of the aid and development experts we have, how effective they have been. That will condition how we approach the next years and the SR allocations. My pitch to you, Pauline, would be that we now have a much more strategically focused, rather than fiscally driven, approach, albeit it is ultimately a combination of the two.

Q42 Mrs Latham: Where is the money that we used to give to Europe to spend on our behalf on international development? Has that been spread equally over the Departments? Has a percentage of it gone to each Department?

Dominic Raab: No, it would not go on a percentage basis, but we would make sure it is looked at on a functional basis, again strategically. I can write back to you, if it is helpful, on the allocations.

Q43 Mrs Latham: That would be helpful. The interesting thing, and obviously I have only seen it today, is that you are giving extra money because of the Barnett formula to the devolved Administrations. Do we give a proportion of our ODA money for them to spend? I know that Scotland spends a lot of money. Does that go against our ODA budget or is it their ODA budget?

Dominic Raab: Ultimately, for international purposes and for legislative purposes, it is the United Kingdom Government as a whole, so the whole of the UK. The allocation for the devolveds for 2021-22 was £11 million. That is steady from the previous year.

Q44 Mrs Latham: Is that counted as our ODA spend or their ODA spend?

Dominic Raab: It is the ODA spend for the UK as a whole. Do not get me wrong; there is a different liaison that we have abroad, but for DAC purposes that is the United Kingdom as one whole United Kingdom.

Q45 Mrs Latham: They do not claim that they have spent any money on ODA, then.

Dominic Raab: You would have to ask our friends in Edinburgh what they claim, but that is the technical answer. I have not elicited the wrath of Chris or any of the other colleagues on the Committee. I am trying to be so well behaved here, Madam Chair.

Chair: You are doing a very good job. Can I bring in Richard Bacon, probably to upset the applecart now?

Q46 Mr Bacon: No, not at all—I have no reputation for doing that, ever. Foreign Secretary, who will be accountable for signing off this spending? If it is ODA that is outside of the FCDO, at the ministerial level and at the accounting officer level, who is ultimately responsible for the sign-off?

Dominic Raab: It is me. Obviously, we clear it with the Treasury and the Prime Minister, but I will be ultimately accountable for it.



Q47 **Mr Bacon:** Even if it was being spent by the Home Office on training policemen in west Africa, or by Defra on agricultural help in east Africa, you would still ultimately be responsible because it was ODA-categorised spend. Is that what you are saying?

Dominic Raab: It depends on what you are talking about. If it is operational, "What went wrong in project X or Y?", the lead would be the sponsoring Department, but in terms of the allocations we make, and their overall strategic coherence, there is no option here. I am the responsible Secretary of State.

Q48 **Mr Bacon:** Yes, but it is also true that every Permanent Secretary is an accounting officer. We have Sir Philip with us this afternoon, but each Permanent Secretary is responsible for the money, including the ODA, that is spent under them, are they not? Perhaps Sir Philip might like to comment on this. It is an anoraky point, I know, but I spent 16 years on the PAC, so forgive me.

Dominic Raab: Philip can supplement this if I get it wrong, but in terms of the spend allocated Department by Department the relevant accounting officer will be the Permanent Secretary. That is the formal accounting methodology or mechanism.

Sir Philip Barton: That is exactly right.

Q49 **Mr Bacon:** If it goes wrong, the person to haul up is the relevant Permanent Secretary for that Department—not you, Sir Philip. Is that right?

Sir Philip Barton: In terms of the accounting officer responsibilities to Parliament, that is right. As the Foreign Secretary says, he has, as Secretary of State in charge of our overall development effort, political responsibility.

Chair: That is very interesting and something I am quite sure we will be monitoring going forwards.

Q50 **Navendu Mishra:** Foreign Secretary, when will the final staffing arrangements for the new Department be in place? It seems that the majority of the FCDO's senior positions are held by former FCO staff. What are you doing to ensure that DFID's culture and expertise is represented in the new Department?

Dominic Raab: That is not true at all in terms of senior management; I can send you the detail on it. We launched the merger on 2 September, with a new supervisory team, so our director-general. We very consciously built on the best talent, not just from within DFID and the Foreign Office, but from across the rest of Whitehall. We have Treasury people, Cabinet Office people or people who have had a lot of experience there. I also was quite keen to have people who had been outside and done some private sector work, academic work or voluntary sector work. I can send you the figures.



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Of the six DGs, not including the Permanent Secretary and the political director, who has a Permanent Secretary status, three hail from the old Foreign Office, two from DFID and one comes from another Department. I did not want this to be a lowest common denominator haggle or a tug of war between two Departments. I want us to create something new.

We proactively looked at bringing people in from outside. The thing that counted above excellence, competence and effectiveness was breadth of experience, because I wanted, and the Prime Minister wanted, above all, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to be the fulcrum of all our international strategy setting, foreign policy decision-making and monitoring. That was the DGs.

We have streamlined the director-level leadership. We have 32 of the 44 directors in the new structure having taken up their roles. Of the director-level roles in the UK, 17 of the permanent or interim appointments so far hail from DFID. I hope that gives you reassurance that any caricature of a Foreign Office takeover was far from the truth. I was not really interested in that, to be honest with you. I am interested in forging something bigger than the sum of its parts. Now we will look at the teams and the staff below that level. That is the focus from now.

If there is any bit of the breakdown there that it is helpful to send you, I am happy to do so.

Q51 Navendu Mishra: Just on that point, it is really good to have clarification from you. My understanding is that you wanted to see cuts to the size of the organisation, and you have been advised that they will be between 5% and 10% initially, with possibly bigger cuts followed by redundancies three years or so down the line. This way, your team might be able to assert that the DFID and FCO merger did not result in redundancies. Do you think that is correct?

Dominic Raab: Navendu, I do not report on leaked things in Committee or anywhere else, but I can reassure you it is not an accurate reflection of the state of play. We have to deal with the financial implications of the shift to 0.5%, and that will require a streamlining process, but we were very clear that the merger would not result itself in compulsory redundancies. We have managed to stick with that. What I want to get, above all, is a streamlined Department that is not so top-heavy that it becomes cumbersome. It is difficult for all the staff involved, but that is why it has been so important to get the DG and the director-level appointments in place.

The other thing I want to do, which the staff have reacted incredibly positively to, is to light up the fire of inspiration and ambition of all those talented people and officers coming up the ranks, whether they are old Foreign Office or old DFID, who now see a much wider career path ahead of them. That is a really positive message to be able to give and send. At that level, the reaction has been extremely good.



Q52 **Navendu Mishra:** Thank you, Foreign Secretary. I appreciate that you have said that that leaked assertion, in your view, is not correct. You have mentioned stopping payments to external consultants that manage portfolios. Has the newly formed FCDO retained enough programme management expertise after dropping experts like non-profit social enterprise providers and Crown agents?

Dominic Raab: We definitely have the capabilities. I am not saying I would eliminate all consultancies; all I am saying is that I would want to shift and build up the capability in the FCDO to project manage, frankly, in a way that it was not there in the old DFID. That will give us better value for money and more control, and is just a financial necessity as a result of the cuts. It requires us to make sure that we leave some scope to build up that capability in the short term, which is difficult when you are under financial pressure.

It is about building up our capacity, but there are quite a few good models for it. With Moazzam Malik, the DG, and with Stefan Dercon, Philip and others, we are working very hard on that.

Chair: Thank you, Foreign Secretary. You are being incredibly generous and open with us. We really appreciate it. We have a few more quickfire questions. We promise that you will be gone by 4.30 but, as you will understand, your Department has released quite a lot of new information to us, and indeed to the House, over the last 24 hours. Plus, we have not been able to see you for seven months, so we have a store of questions.

Q53 **Kate Osamor:** Foreign Secretary, I want to take you back to east Africa. I recently wrote to you about the Ugandan elections. A lot of Ugandans in the diaspora have written to me and made representation about the elections. They are asking me to ask you about your position on the human rights abuses that have taken place, such as the house arrest of the opposition candidate, Bobi Wine. I know you have been very busy, but it just feels very quiet and people feel very despondent because they have not heard from you. I wanted to give you an opportunity to give us your view on what you have heard and what representation you have made to the Ugandan authorities.

Dominic Raab: There are concerns about human rights and the conduct of the election. We have raised them at official level but also ministerially. To be very clear on Bobi Wine, we do not think the detention of and the restrictions on him are justified. We have made that very clear. I have worked on Uganda, including northern Uganda, since 2000. I have a very deep personal commitment and attachment to it. We want to see it heading in the right direction. We have raised all the issues you have cited, and I am happy to be clear on that.

We have a very close relationship with Uganda, as we do with many countries. It is the same issue in Ethiopia. In a way, my approach to these things is that the stronger the relationship—the deeper the partnership, the longer it goes back—the more reason you have to have



honest, candid conversations with them as partners and friends. Uganda is the same.

Q54 **Kate Osamor:** That is why the diaspora wants us to speak up very loudly and clearly that we do not stand with any democracy that is not allowed to function and not allowing its people to vote. It is good to hear you saying that, but please keep the pressure on and please keep your eye on what is happening out there, because the images and stories that I am getting are very horrific. It is very worrying. I just wanted to take this opportunity to talk to you about it. I appreciate your response, because I know you did not come here to speak about that.

Dominic Raab: It is no problem. Thank you, Kate.

Q55 **Mrs Latham:** Pre-2005, I went to Ethiopia and it jogged a memory when you mentioned Ethiopia. This was with the Committee. When we were there, we saw a fantastic programme to stop FGM. It was from the grass roots up, and it was dealing with the elders and religious leaders in the different villages. Unfortunately, that programme stopped, but it was doing a lot of good work.

People working for DFID, or FCDO now, go out on these programmes for so long, maybe two or three years. They have some ideas and they put them into practice. Then somebody else comes out and says, "I have a good idea. Let us do that". There is no continuity of programme—it is stop, start, stop, start. They might do some really good work for two years, but it takes you a while to get into a programme and a while to get out of it. I just wonder how you are going to tackle that and have longevity of purpose, so that we are seriously focusing on the bottom billion and the most vulnerable people in the world, which includes people who suffer FGM.

Dominic Raab: I totally agree. On Ethiopia, we are still supporting FGM programmes there. The key thing is, as you said, not to throw out good programmes and reinvent the wheel every two seconds. There are very few examples where I have done that, having been Foreign Secretary for 18 months now. The girls' education has been running for many years. We have said that this is one of the most effective programmes we have, and it is going to be one of our G7 presidency priorities. I am trying to instil as much continuity as possible, although there are some areas where we can do even more. I try to avoid initiative-itis, if I can put it that way.

Q56 **Mrs Latham:** Last time I went out to Ethiopia, which was pre-Covid, I asked about this programme and they said it had not continued. They had other priorities now. Are you saying it is continuing and we are seeing progress being made in Ethiopia on stopping FGM? They said it had stopped.

Dominic Raab: For example, in the school I visited near Addis, there was very clear evidence of it through the awareness campaign. Whether



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that was historic or current, I do not know. I can write to the Committee about where we are on FGM in Ethiopia and Africa more generally.

Q57 **Chair:** Have you done any analysis of the potential harms of ending projects early?

Dominic Raab: In the context of the GNI review and the shift from 0.7% to 0.5%, that was one of the things that informed our analysis. We want to keep as much continuity as possible.

If I am really honest, the other opportunity that you get as a new Foreign Secretary, to answer Pauline's point, but also when you have a tighter financial envelope, is to kick the tyres on what adds the most value. We have done an element of both as part of the analysis. If there is a particular area or project that you are concerned about that is not valued enough or you think is overvalued, I would be interested to hear about it.

Q58 **Chair:** One area that I am puzzled about is this: if conflict resolution is one of your priorities, why you are halving the conflict, stability and security fund?

Dominic Raab: Some of that has been reprofiled or will be picked up by the FCDO. We have looked as rigorously as we can at those joint areas, like the prosperity fund and the CSSF, and made sure that we are as focused as possible. Some of the figures mask bits of BEIS and Defra work that have come into the FCDO. There are some things from the CSSF that we will pick up in the FCDO, particularly with a new unit that we are establishing, which will focus for the whole of Whitehall on conflict radar, conflict management, conflict stabilisation and dispute resolution.

Our ambitions have not dimmed, but we have looked at particularly those cross-cutting funds very rigorously. They come under quite a bit of pressure in an exercise like this, but we have made sure we keep the ones that add the most value. I can assure you of that.

Q59 **Chair:** I have been incredibly proud of the Government's commitment to dealing with immunisation throughout, and the Covid response that we have been leading on, but I am concerned that there was a lot of shift, with those who would normally be giving vaccines for tuberculosis, malaria and HIV focusing their work on vaccinating for Covid in the short-term. Can you give assurance that the immunisation programme we have always supported will continue to be a priority?

Dominic Raab: Yes, it absolutely is. We have announced an extra £340 million for the WHO in terms of core voluntary funding. The experience we have had of Covid will inform and strengthen some of the wider pandemic work. The truth is that, after decades of warning that a pandemic of this kind could hit, coronavirus has been the reality check of what happens when it does and will inform, re-energise and reinvigorate a lot of that other work.



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We are still the leading donor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. Although there is always a finite amount of money, which needs to go in different areas with fluid priorities—and obviously coronavirus is high up that—we are making sure that we do not lose the progress we have made in those different areas. If you think of malaria, TB and AIDS, we do not want to slip up in those areas.

At the same time, we should be proud. You are right to say, Sarah, that the commitment of half a billion pounds, through the COVAX mechanism, for a billion doses of the vaccine for the most vulnerable and poorest countries around the world is something for the here and now. When I was in east Africa, it was hugely welcomed. When I talked to Dr Tedros, it was hugely welcomed. We should be proud. We obviously think it is a good thing to do in this country, but it has been hugely well received and it will have a major impact. We can be proud of not just our vaccine rollout and looking after people in this country, which is the Government's duty, but leading the way.

It is not just the commitment that we make; it is the fact that we can then provide a rallying cry for other countries to pitch in. We will be talking to the new Administration in the US about this, and that will be part of our G7 set of priorities. Your concern that we lost sight of the other international public health goals is well made. Matt Hancock and I had a long discussion about this in the context of the review. I assure you that he and I, working together, will not lose sight of that.

Q60 Chair: That is very reassuring. Both our safeguarding report and the one on the secondary impacts of Covid showed us that the more you involve local people with the design, development and actioning of projects, the more secure and the better value for money they are. Does the Department have any plans to make sure that local people are involved at the heart of all projects that we fund going forwards?

Dominic Raab: We welcome and pay tribute to the Committee on two excellent reports. We mainstream getting local actors' buy-in. That is part of what we do, particularly if they are the delivery partner. There are lots of good reasons why you do it through NGOs and local actors rather than through Governments, although it can be balanced. Aside from the fact that they want it, it is part of the rigour of delivering high-impact projects. We will take into account and factor in the various recommendations from your report but, if at any point you think there are ways that we could be doing that more effectively or assiduously, I am open to that.

It comes back to the ethos that Stefan Dercon has enthused me with, which I mentioned at the start. Sustainable, long-term partnerships require very clear two-way benefit. People need to be honest about that. That must involve the local communities affected by them. I talked about global Britain being more liberal on free trade and doing business with greater integrity. Part of our pitch, particularly when we go to Africa, is that communities get well treated, it goes to what they care about, we



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respect workers' rights and we do not leave the local government or the central Government indebted. We should be not just proud of that. It makes us much more attractive as an aid partner and as a business, when UK businesses go to invest.

Q61 Chair: I really welcome hearing you say all of that. This Committee this year is going to be launching an overarching inquiry looking at the philosophy and culture around aid. We want to see what works, what does not work, what gives the best value and what gives the longest benefit. It is very good to hear that you are open to that.

You have been incredibly generous with your time. It is reassuring to have a Minister who clearly knows and is passionate about his brief. We hope very much that you will come back to this Committee, when you have announcements or big decisions are being made, as well as on a regular basis, because it would be great to have more of your input. We are grateful that you are also keen for the Committee's input. We care about this and take our parliamentary duty of scrutiny very seriously. It is good to hear that you are open to that dialogue going forwards.

Dominic Raab: Aid and development are heart and soul issues. I know how seriously you, individually and collectively, take it. You have not given me an easy time, but it has been a pleasure and I will certainly come back again soon.

Chair: Thank you very much. Before I end this session, can I also say on behalf of the Committee a thank you to Fergus Reid, who is our Principal Clerk and has been for the last three and a half years? He is stepping down. We are incredibly grateful for the service, direction and support he has given to all of us on the team. On that sad note, this session is now over. Thank you all very much.