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International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Future of UK aid, HC 1141

Thursday 22 April 2021

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 22 April 2021.

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Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Theo Clarke; Brendan Clarke-Smith; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger; Navendu Mishra; Mr Virendra Sharma.

Questions 84 - 167

Witnesses

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



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Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dominic Raab and Sir Philip Barton.

Q84 **Chair:** I would like to start this special session with the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab, and Sir Philip Barton, who is the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Thank you both very much for joining us. We are very grateful that you are giving us two hours of your time in your very busy schedule. As you understand, with the announcement of the ODA allocations, we do have a lot of questions for you. I know that there are a lot of people watching this to see what their future is likely to be.

Foreign Secretary, we are all surprised that a written statement was issued at 5.00 pm yesterday with very little detail, to be honest. We would have thought that with the depth of the cuts and changes there would, first, have been more detail and, secondly, that you would have come to the Dispatch Box to tell the House about it. I know personally that I have constituents who work in the sector who are concerned whether they have their jobs or not, not to mention the countries that are waiting to see what is going to happen to their projects. Why did you make that decision to do a written statement?

Dominic Raab: First of all, we would not normally set out the thematic allocations for spending at this early stage in the financial year. In fact, it is almost unprecedented. What I have tried to do is set out the raw data, broken down by allocation. We have not done this in anything other than a fully transparent way. I had given it to the Committee and Members of the House the day before, precisely so that you can grill me for the two hours you have me here today.

The normal process, just to be clear, is for country allocations to be published via the Statistics on International Development, and that process does not take place until 2022. I can also go through the regional allocations, but, as I said, we would not normally proactively publish the details at the start of the financial year in this way. The normal process is that they would go through the DevTracker and the supplementary estimates later. I wanted to make sure you had it the day before, and you can ask me any question you like about any aspect you like.

Q85 **Chair:** That is very kind of you. Unfortunately, there is so little detail that it is hard to ask the specific questions that we want to, because we are particularly interested in the country-by-country. Also, these are somewhat unprecedented times. We understand the fiscal situation and the decision that you have made to go down to 0.5%, even if not all of us agree with it, but what is unprecedented, for example, is that for projects that are normally funded on a rolling basis, their money ended on 31 March; for 22 days they have had no money. We are told that ambassadors do not know what the impact is going to be on their countries. With all of that background, could we ask that you come to the Chamber and actually speak to and take questions from Members?



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Dominic Raab: I am here in front of the Select Committee of the Chamber. We will of course embrace the full scrutiny of the Chamber, but I am afraid I just do not accept your premise. Ambassadors are not saying that; certainly none has reported that to me. What we do, as well as the thematic and regional allocations, all of which I can speak to, is we then go through and are in the process of finalising country plans, but that takes longer. That data will inherently and naturally come later. What I have tried to do, as early and as proactively as possible, is give you the headline allocations. There have been colleagues on all sides of the House who have been champing at the bit for me to do so.

As I said, the normal process of our DevTracker and supplementary estimates to provide the more granular detail comes much later. We are certainly embracing that transparency, and I would hope that coming to your Committee and releasing as much as we have at this point via a written ministerial statement the day before demonstrates that good will.

Chair: Thank you very much. The data we are using for our questions is based on the DevTracker from 2019 because we could not find any more recent comparable, so take that into account.

Q86

Mrs Latham: Thank you for coming, Foreign Secretary. Could you tell us how you decided which parts of the budget of the newly merged Department, to say it nicely—I really mean the takeover by FCO of DFID—would be increased and which would be cut? In other words, how was the decision taken? What criteria were applied? How did the process work?

Dominic Raab: Just on your point about the merger, if you look at both staff numbers and the directors-general and the directors, far from being a takeover of one side or another, we have genuinely fused the best of both. If you look at the background of our DGs—our directors-general—we have brought in expertise from outside and senior leaders within both previous organisations who have that external or broader expertise.

The way I wanted to do this was similar to the GNI review for 2020. Rather than salami-slicing budgets, with a very difficult financial decision that we have had to make—one that reflects the economic circumstances, with the worst economic contraction for 300 years and a budget deficit that is double what we saw at the peak of the financial crisis—we have to make sure we really try to maximise the strategic impact of the £10 billion we have for 2021-22.

We looked at seven key priorities for the purposes of delivering poverty reduction. They are climate biodiversity, Covid and global health security, girls' education, science and research—there is a very exciting piece of work we are doing around science and research to bolster the productivity of our ODA budget and our development policies—open societies and conflict, humanitarian assistance and trade. We have set out the strategic criteria. I previously published the strategic criteria that we would adopt, and we have formulated the spending decisions and the



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allocations based on that, rather than saying X percentage would come off the thematic or geographic allocation. Those are the broad criteria and that is the broad approach.

- Q87 **Mrs Latham:** Is this merger just an exercise in raiding the former ODA budget that DFID used to handle and the operating budgets to support the Foreign and Commonwealth Office activity?

Dominic Raab: No, that is not true. I appreciate you have prepared your questions, but that does not reflect the seven strategic priorities I have just set out. We have a major piece of work we are doing on climate change, and of course the Foreign Office has traditionally been involved in all international policy work, but actually that represents both the development aspect and also the climate change agenda, which is cross-Government.

There is the work we are doing on global health security in a year and at a time when we have pioneered the research on the AstraZeneca vaccine. We have been a world leader in terms of our contribution to COVAX, where we have secured 1 billion doses, and broader public health considerations. I am not sure that is traditional diplomatic terrain; it is much more cross-cutting and certainly very heavily engages the traditional development side of Government work. Girls' education is clearly and squarely a development piece of policy.

There is something rather different and innovative, though, in bringing in the trade and the science and research piece, and looking at how we use all the tools we have right across Government, particularly in the innovation space, to maximise the impact of our development policies and ODA spend. That is a bit different but it is hugely welcome. I am not sure that fits the traditional diplomacy or development paradigms. It is something new, but all the better for it.

- Q88 **Mr Liddell-Grainger:** Good morning, Foreign Secretary. First of all, can I declare an interest? I am chairman of the CPA UK branch. Can I ask you a three-part question? The first is about the status of the Commonwealth. As you know, we have gone on far too long being a charity. We need to change it. Lord Ahmad has been first rate, and I absolutely admire him, but we need your help, Foreign Secretary, to make sure this changes: first, in helping us get parliamentary time; secondly, if we can get a Bill, either in the lower or upper House, in terms of you and your Department's support. That is the first question.

The second one is about the integrated review. All of us have been reading it with keen interest. You say in it, quite rightly, that for democratic values we need to defend and champion democracy at home and globally. That is absolutely right, and it falls with SDG 16, but I am very concerned: will the FCDO have enough money to help the Westminster Foundation, the CPA and others to be able to continue doing what we are doing with soft power between both Houses, and to project what we are doing? You have been very generous to the CPA in the work



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we have been doing, helping us to make sure that we continue doing that.

The third part is a very specific question. We signed a 20-year agreement between us, the French, and Unitaid. As you know, Unitaid has done a remarkable job around the world; it is a very good organisation. That is now being reviewed. The worry that I have, and probably a lot of others have, is that it would break our relationship with the French, which is not a good thing at the moment, but it would also mean somewhere like Unitaid would have its budget cut when we have agreed to something. You may not know the specifics, Foreign Secretary, but I would like you to look at this, because I believe this is just the tip of the iceberg. I am just using one example, but if we go against this, I feel we may be seen in a very different light.

Dominic Raab: I missed the last bit; something happened on the sound at our end. Could you repeat the last bit of your three-limbed question?

Mr Liddell-Grainger: It is to do with Unitaid, which works around poverty throughout the world. We have a 20-year agreement with the French. We signed a 20-year agreement on this and we had agreed to do this. It is under review. There are two parts: first, we should not be breaking something we have with the French, especially at the moment; secondly, it is probably the tip of the iceberg where these agreements are potentially in difficulty. That is just one example of an organisation that I happen to know, and I know they are doing a good job. I just want clarification that we are not looking to renege on anything that we have agreed so far.

Dominic Raab: First of all, on the Commonwealth, your points are duly noted and registered. Let me take a good long look at that. I am happy to come and have a chat or write back to you, whichever you prefer.

On the integrated review, I saw Richard yesterday in relation to other matters but gave him the same reassurance that, of course, we continue to hugely value what the Westminster Foundation is doing. You will be reassured that we are preserving and safeguarding as best we can the funding for the Westminster Foundation. More generally, open societies and the democracy piece is a key bit not just of the IR but also the ODA priorities. I mentioned to Pauline the seven ODA priorities, and open societies, including human rights and democracy, are a key part of that. If anything, we are ramping up the work we are doing. That is reflected in our media freedom campaign and the alliance, which goes from strength to strength, the freedom of religion or belief work that we are doing, and the Magnitsky sanctions, which we have used recently and I have given a statement to the House of Commons on.

I will also look at the Unitaid piece for you. Again, I can come and have a chat or write to you. More generally, across the board we will not be breaching any of our legal obligations, and although I have tried to avoid ringfencing elements within the allocation process because it inhibits



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taking a strategic view, there are some things that are legally ringfenced, and we will of course adhere to our legal commitments around that.

- Q89 **Chair:** You have had responsibility for development policy for seven months. What do you think have been your and the Department's top achievements over that time, and what would you have done differently?

Dominic Raab: You can always look at lessons learned. We have dealt with an unprecedented set of challenges. With the review we had to do in 2020, with the dip in GNI, we got maximum bang for our buck and maximum impact in challenging financial circumstances. Although I know that there is always going to be criticism and concern, we have done the same this time around. The merger has allowed us to think in a more innovative and, frankly, a new way about development and our ODA budget, not just as some siloed element of foreign policy but something that is at the beating heart of foreign policy. The fact that we are bringing in the rest of Whitehall, not just in terms of the FCDO structure but in terms of what trade does and what the Defence Secretary is doing, means we are much more joined up. That works.

We have the advantage, albeit in a very difficult financial envelope, that throughout the SR we have the three pillars of the integrated review, which sets our strategic way forward. We have the SR and the allocations tailored towards that. The merger allows us to do things and think about things in a more impactful way because we are not siloed.

- Q90 **Chair:** What frustrated you? What would you have rather done differently?

Dominic Raab: Obviously there have been limits on travel. We have spent a lot of time working on repatriations. We just had to do it. We have learnt a lot about supply chains; I know that is not, strictly speaking, something that is traditionally in the development place, but actually in terms of the UK's dependence on supply chains, if you look from 5G through to PPE through to vaccine supply chains, we learnt an enormous amount. I chair Project Defend across Government, looking at how we diversify our supply chains.

Two very important things come out thematically and geographically in the integrated review. One is the Indo-Pacific tilt, in terms of where the opportunities are but also the scope for dealing with some of the great challenges we face, and also the greater focus within Africa. We have the things that we will do baseline across the board—humanitarian work is one of those—but there is also the strategic lens that we have applied to east Africa. I was out in Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya, looking at how we integrate everything we are doing, from training the peacekeepers that are involved in the region through to the girls' education programme. I got the chance to go to some of the schools that are benefitting from that. We are really thinking holistically about how we maximise our impact.



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East Africa is a really important area for us. If we had not been so restrained, I would have gone to Somalia already. That is one of the areas in Africa in the traditional development and aid piece where I am concerned, but where I also see the opportunities to have an even greater impact, notwithstanding the challenges.

- Q91 **Chair:** When you were last before us, you were talking about implementing KPIs. What are your KPIs for the Department and what progress are you making against them?

Dominic Raab: If you look at the merger as a whole, we have made a huge amount of progress. To give you a sense of the process, we have 40 of the 43 directors in place. We were aiming for 95% of the teams to be merged by the end of April; 87% were done by 1 April. It will probably take a month longer to hit the overall target, but that is huge progress. We are working through the country-by-country plans. We have a KPI framework that is not country-by-country agreed, because that will be done with the country plans, but it has certainly been agreed at a strategic level. Kumar Iyer, the director-general for delivery, has done a huge amount of work in terms of not just having it set from on high, but in fusing it and merging it with all of the work we are doing on the merger and the transformation of the teams.

I have to give huge credit to the teams; they have been under a lot of pressure to do all of this in the Covid pandemic environment, but we have a Department that understands much more what its mission is, both at a strategic and more granular level.

- Q92 **Chair:** Can I bring in Sir Philip at this point? I am assuming you have done a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to the merger. What remains to be done, and what is the timescale for completion?

Sir Philip Barton: As the Foreign Secretary said, we have put in place the leadership at the UK end, both at the DG level from the outset and now with all directors in¹. We have pretty much completed the integration of teams, both in the UK and overseas. There is longer-term work around unifying our IT systems. We are now on single budgeting, but we need to do some more work around bringing completely unified financial arrangements in place during the course of this financial year. There is also work we will complete this year around aligning terms and conditions of the two legacy Departments as we look at our overall approach to our people.

- Q93 **Chris Law:** Good morning, Sir Philip. I wanted to ask you a couple of questions regarding the monitoring in FCDO. Can you tell me how the FCDO has monitored where cuts to UK aid have fallen so far, and have you been able to compile a sectoral and geographical breakdown of these changes?

¹ 40 of 43 Directors were in place at the time of the session.



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Sir Philip Barton: Sorry; was that a question for me or the Foreign Secretary?

Chris Law: Yes, to Philip. My apologies.

Dominic Raab: Madam Chair, can I interject at this stage, please? I am very happy for Philip to join, but that is really a policy question and I am very happy to answer it. If there is something that is missing or a technical oversight then Philip and I work hand in glove, but really this is a question of the thematic and geographic allocations and equality impact assessments; it is absolutely right and proper that Ministers answer to Parliamentary Select Committees on that kind of thing.

Chair: We are very grateful for that, Foreign Secretary. We will direct all questions to you, and then if you want to pass them on to Sir Philip that is at your discretion. We have some quickfire questions, if that is alright.

Dominic Raab: Go for it.

Q94 **Chris Law:** How has the FCDO monitored where cuts to UK aid have fallen so far? Have you been able to compile a sectoral and geographical breakdown of these changes?

Dominic Raab: As mentioned in answer to the earlier questions, rather than salami-slice, we set out a strategic set of criteria. As I mentioned, I set that out before the House of Commons. The broad thematic allocations are in the written statement that was laid before Parliament.

In terms of geographic allocation, 50% of the FCDO bilateral ODA is in Africa and 32% is in the Indo-Pacific and south Asia. That is important for the reasons I described. I can give you any further geographic detail, subject to the country-by-country planning that is still going on.

In terms of monitoring the impact, I know this has come up previously in the House. We carried out an equalities impact assessment. One of the points that I can share with you is that when we did it on the allocations and the programme budgeting that we are doing off the back of the thematic and geographic allocations, it showed no evidence that programmes targeting those with protected characteristics were more likely to be reduced than other programmes. That can give the Select Committee some reassurance.

Q95 **Chris Law:** That is helpful. If there are further details, if you could please share them with the Committee, that would be really helpful. How well do you and your Ministers understand the sectoral and geographic impacts on the ground of spending cuts in their portfolios? What discussions have you had with INGOs and NGOs on this matter?

Dominic Raab: The budgeting, not least with the supplementary estimates and the formulation of the detailed granular spending, takes some time to bed through, precisely because we monitor it very carefully.



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On your point about engagement and consultation, since we announced the move to 0.5% in November we have engaged at ministerial level and official level with NGOs, other partners in terms of delivery partners, and parliamentarians. We hosted a roundtable for civil society in November. As we go through the process at thematic, geographic and country-by-country level, we will take the feedback and listen to it very carefully.

There is no getting around the fact that we have had to make some very difficult decisions because of the economic and financial damage done by the pandemic, but I hope giving you that overlay of the process and the points for engagement with our partners, and indeed consultation with international organisations and key allies in terms of governance, shows that we are very sensitive and mindful of the different views. Lots of them, of course, will be pushing in different directions. That is inevitable when you have finite resources.

Q96

Chris Law: I accept your point about the financial restraints; however, you did not show any financial restraints when it came to defence spending, which exceeds NATO targets.

If I can move on to the 2020-21 supplementary estimates, they show a large proportion of the in-year ODA cuts coming from reductions to the capital investment in the CDC, which has been reduced from £1.1 billion to £650 million. What discussions took place with the CDC to understand the impact on their portfolio? Is it because they have fewer viable investment opportunities identified? Lastly on that question, by cutting the aid to CDC by almost 50%, are we just pulling out the carpet from under the private sector in developing countries, when right now they need the support and investment the most?

Dominic Raab: First of all, on the defence budget, I appreciate the point you have made, although, as I mentioned in my comments to the Chair, the development work we do is actually quite well integrated with the security work we do in east Africa. You can see that with the training of peacekeepers. I have been out in Kenya and looked at what we do to help train peacekeepers on, for example, defusing IEDs, right the way through to the cyber piece, not least given the amount of hostile state activity.

In relation to CDC more generally, we hugely value what CDC does. I have spoken to the director in relation to their role. If anything, I would like to look more at what further innovative instruments we can use, because it is the organisation that can often operate in the highest-risk climate with the greatest opportunity in development terms, precisely because they are fragile or conflict-affected countries. We have engaged very closely with it. I have spoken from a political level. Juliet Chua, my director-general on finance matters, has engaged very closely. Moazzam Malik, who is the director-general who covers and leads on many of the development and ODA areas, is constantly plugged into CDC. I genuinely see a very significant and hugely important role for CDC going forward,



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but I cannot tell you that any element of the ODA apparatus has been immune from financial restraints, because we have had to go to 0.5%.

Q97 **Chris Law:** Just on that last point about the 0.5%, would you not agree that, for many people who are watching this, the increase of 40 new Trident missiles at the expense of the poorest in the world is a wasted amount of money at a time when the world is so critical with Covid and the struggles many people are facing?

Dominic Raab: No, I am afraid I would not. All we have sought to do is maintain our minimum credible deterrence. Nuclear security is incredibly important, not least given the proliferation of hostile state activity and the diverse nature of the threats that we face. As I said before, there is a golden thread running through the national and international security piece that we do, coupled with the stability and the development and the diplomatic, as well as the ODA spend that we provide regionally and globally.

Q98 **Navendu Mishra:** Thank you, Foreign Secretary, for making time for our Committee. Just on the point of UN peacekeeping missions, data from the United Nations shows that the UK falls quite short. The UK provided 286 troops, most of whom serve in Cyprus, which is a relatively quiet mission, and only 18 of those are women, with five police officers, no military advisers and very little military equipment. This data places the UK 50th amongst peacekeeping contributions, and smaller countries like Fiji provide more than double the personnel of the UK. Do you think that is appropriate? Would you like to see an increase in UK contribution to peacekeeping missions?

Dominic Raab: Sorry, I do not accept that. That is a very skewed and, frankly, unsourced set of assertions. Feel free to write to me; I am happy to give you a blow-by-blow, detailed answer and, indeed, rebuttal. I have been out in Cyprus. I have seen the work our peacekeepers do, and I have been out and seen the work we do training other peacekeepers. We make a huge commitment through the UN and more generally. I know it is highly prized by the UN; I spoke to the Secretary General within the last week, so I am afraid I do not accept that.

Q99 **Navendu Mishra:** Foreign Secretary, I am not suggesting that the Cyprus mission is not important. My question is more about the data that is publicly available from the United Nations website regarding the numbers and contribution compared to other countries. You may find it difficult to disagree with the data from the UN. It places the UK 50th amongst peacekeeping contributions.

Dominic Raab: Why don't you write to me and set out the detailed source that you are quoting, rather than paraphrasing and not citing it in a way that I can respond to on the granular detail? I will give you a very full response, I reassure you.

Q100 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Good morning. Sir Philip, the supplementary estimate memorandum states that the FCDO has committed up to £1.3



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billion of new ODA to counter the health, humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19. Is this new ODA or funding that has been moved from other programmes?

Sir Philip Barton: As I am sure you know, the supplementary estimates are adjustments made in the course of a financial year to the main estimates, which are the original allocations by the Treasury to Departments. In a sense, what the supplementary estimates show is the changes to those main estimates. What you are citing, in a sense, is the amount of money at the point at which the changes were made in-year.

Q101 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Which programmes have had to be changed due to this?

Sir Philip Barton: You have heard the Foreign Secretary say in evidence, both today and in his previous appearance, how information about programmes appears. It will appear on DevTracker in due course, as the Foreign Secretary set out earlier, in terms of the future allocations by theme.

Q102 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** At the moment, how are we monitoring the impact of the pandemic on other global health challenges? I am thinking of things like malaria, HIV and routine vaccinations.

Dominic Raab: That is a question for me as Foreign Secretary. We have pledged a huge amount to the global health piece: £1.65 billion to Gavi between 2021 and 2025. As I mentioned earlier, we are harnessing the UK expertise in science research and development. You can see that in the fact that we have pioneered the vaccine, but also, at the COVAX level, we want to make sure it is equitably distributed.

In relation to wider public health, we have made a further £340 million in new core contributions to the World Health Organization. You are right to say that things like the traditional polio and tropical diseases have been somewhat eclipsed in terms of the focus of attention this year because of Covid. That is inherent in having an emergency and a pandemic like this, but we do watch that and stay alert to it very closely. Of course, it depends a little on the feedback we get from the national reporting systems, for example, in the African countries affected, but we monitor that as best we can. We try to make sure, again as best we can, within the financial circumstances everyone finds themselves, that we are not taking our eye off the ball of the huge achievements that we have made in supporting efforts against malaria, polio, TB, et cetera.

Q103 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Finally, it was said that there are no immediate plans to publish a global health strategy and that we are going to continue to review the approach. Is this still the case? What do you think this may mean in practice?

Dominic Raab: The point about the spend is that inevitably it is firmed up through DevTracker and the other mechanisms in-year, because we need to stay agile and adjust to what the real-time reporting, which you



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rightly asked about, is telling us. In that sense that is a good thing, and it is published in the normal way.

In terms of the strategy, we have a clear agenda on Covid but also on those other health priorities that you mentioned. If there is one other element that you are not sure about or you would like to hear more on what we are doing, write to me; I am very happy to set out the full detail.

- Q104 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, we did not really get an answer to my colleague's question about when we are going to find out about the new ODA money for health projects, other than it will be on DevTracker at some point. Do we have a timescale? Is it likely to be a week, a month or six months? The other question is whether the actual organisations on the ground get consulted on this, and do they know in advance of it going on DevTracker?

Dominic Raab: Let me write to you about precisely when it goes up on DevTracker.

We have constant feedback from our partners. We proactively try to engage both with the global NGOs and the local, regional and in-country partners. Even if we were not, we would get feedback. In relation to the negotiations and the contractual work we do, we scrutinise very carefully; we engage and seek evidence on the impact that we are having, but also on the accountability of those funds. That is an ongoing process; that is happening constantly throughout the Department and around the world.

I will write to you about what the plans are for updating DevTracker on the various different health programmes.

- Q105 **Chair:** Feedback tends to be retrospective. Are you proactively speaking to people in the countries to see how you should be shaping your programmes there?

Dominic Raab: Yes, we do proactively engage. Equally, of course every NGO and every partner in every country will want their particular project not just maintained but increased. That is the nature of these things. We also have to make sure we look very carefully at the feedback, and, in terms of value for money and against the strategic priorities that I have set out, make sure we are allocating it smartly. We get that feedback constantly, and of course we proactively go looking for it.

Chair: Thank you; that is very reassuring.

- Q106 **Theo Clarke:** Foreign Secretary, in the integrated review there was a commitment to exceed the 2% NATO defence spending target, but it also said that a return to spending 0.7% on ODA would only be possible when the fiscal situation allows. First of all, can you set out exactly what that means? Can we have a definition of the fiscal situation allowing? Secondly, with extreme poverty being a key driver of conflict and instability, is this not a false economy to be cutting the aid budget with



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one hand but raising defence with the other?

Dominic Raab: In terms of the second part of your question, as I mentioned before, I do not regard these in siloed terms the way that you perhaps suggested, inadvertently or otherwise. In terms of the work we do internationally around security and defence, yes, we have our traditional threats that we face, but we actually have a much wider, diverse range of threats. They feed into a lot of the international priorities, including the development work we do.

If I look at cyber, propaganda and misinformation, we have had attacks on the research around the vaccine, which we made public at the time in order to call out those responsible. In all of these areas it is not just traditional state to state; it is also non-state activity. Working not just with our closest allies but also with our development partners, we are looking to make sure we safeguard many of the most vulnerable countries around the world. One of the advantages of the integrated review and the ministerial meetings that I chair—I think there are nine—with officials and Ministers across the piece is how integrated that piece is. I have seen it first-hand in east Africa.

On the question of the return to 0.7%, as I said, this was a decision we took in sorrow and with regret, because of the fiscal condition that we found ourselves in. We intend to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. We have not set out bespoke or fixed criteria for that, but what we want to do is look at the fiscal and economic position in the round, once we recover and as we recover from what are pretty exceptional and unprecedented circumstances. It is certainly a rounded judgment as well as the obvious looking at how the deficit, the structural hit to the public finances and the debt burden is affected.

- Q107 **Theo Clarke:** To give you a specific example, how effective can something like the new conflict unit be if the programmes that are dealing with conflict are actually being cut?

Dominic Raab: In terms of the conflict centre that we are creating in the FCDO, it is a great opportunity to bring in all the work we are doing on PSVI and on accountability for war crimes more generally, which is a personal passion of mine. On the diplomatic piece, I am out in Cyprus next week; we are looking at the five-plus-one talks. Clearly, there is a huge amount of work being done around Yemen. Following the logic of integration, which the merger brings forward, having a bespoke part of the FCDO that is proactively looking at where we can supplement and support the peace and the conflict management efforts that others are engaged in is critically important. It can show that, even in a constrained financial envelope, we can add even greater value. The ODA piece is one element of it; you are right to raise it, and I appreciate the different views there will be on it, but it is actually about much more than that. It is about using our diplomatic convening power. It is about the peacekeeping effort that we put in. It is also about looking smartly at



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where we add value, rather than just looking at the across-the-board allocations of ODA.

- Q108 **Theo Clarke:** Foreign Secretary, you mentioned Yemen. This week we have heard some extremely distressing evidence from witnesses in Yemen as part of our inquiry. Did the FCDO undertake an impact assessment on the reduction of aid to Yemen, its effects on child mortality and its impact on the chances of creating the conditions required for peace?

Dominic Raab: Of course we looked very carefully at what is going on in Yemen, as indeed with all of the work we are doing. I know there were some questions about this earlier in the week, and the Yemen country director, Chris Bold, was asked about this. Just to be clear, we identified the risks that we see across the board. We have conducted the equality impact assessment that I described. In terms of a standalone impact assessment, country by country, done in a formalised way, that is not the way we have operated to date, mainly because there are too many scenarios and they overlap. I am not sure it would be particularly effective.

On Yemen, we are very closely involved. Martin Griffiths, as the UN special envoy, has done an incredibly important job. The constellation of diplomatic effort has shifted and taken a real boost with the new focus, drive and support from the new US Administration under President Biden. My overarching concern in Yemen is that the Houthis are still engaged, notwithstanding the Saudi offer and the Yemeni offer, in aggressive military activity, attacks on Saudi Arabia and the desire to take Marib. We have to persuade the Houthis to come to the diplomatic table, because that is the only way there will be lasting, enduring peace for the people of Yemen.

- Q109 **Theo Clarke:** How much of the ODA budget for this current financial year has already been pre-allocated? I would be interested to hear what your policy is on changing this allocation in-year. For example, if there was a natural disaster, would you be able to respond to that change, or is it all pre-allocated?

Dominic Raab: We have a £30 million crisis reserve, precisely to give us some flexibility and agility around the humanitarian piece. There is always some firming up of the budget allocation against actual spend that takes place within year, and that gives us some residual freedom of manoeuvre as well. As you rightly say, we should do the strategic planning but we also have to be able to react to events, particularly those that are unforeseen.

- Q110 **Chair:** Could I clarify something around impact assessments? You said that you do not do an impact assessment on every eventuality, which I understand, but have you done an impact assessment on the cuts to country budgets? For example, I am thinking in Sahel, where we believe it has been cut by about 90%. That is a very unstable area where Daesh



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is really mobilising, so would you do an impact assessment on cutting funding there to our national security, for example?

Dominic Raab: We certainly carried out an impact assessment that looked at the bilateral country spending, absolutely. As I mentioned before, we looked at the evidence that it threw back. Of course it will have an impact. It showed no evidence that the programmes targeting those with protected characteristics would be more likely to be reduced than others.

- Q111 **Chair:** More broadly, would an impact assessment consider the potential threat that that might bring to this country in terms of security?

Dominic Raab: We would of course look at that very carefully. There is no magic in the formula of impact assessments; it is part science and part art, but we obviously look at the most vulnerable countries very closely. Actually, by setting our seven strategic priorities, which include humanitarian assistance—I conducted the process both within the FCDO but also across Whitehall—it gives us an opportunity, line by line, to assess very carefully what the impact on programmes will be.

The way we did it this year is we looked at it programme by programme, but we also then did a separate process on top of that, looking at it region by region. That is on top of and before the country-by-country planning that we do. We have never done as much granular scrutiny of the impact of our financial spend as we have done this year and over the last two years; of course, that is absolutely right, given the pandemic.

- Q112 **Chair:** I appreciate the huge amount of work. Is that something that you would be able to put into the public domain, even if only the headlines of it?

Dominic Raab: I can certainly write to you and give you as much as I can about the process and the detail of it.

Chair: That would be fantastic.

- Q113 **Chris Law:** If I could just pick up Sarah's point, you said there is more work being done than ever before at granular level to examine where the money is going. How can you be sure you are making the right choices, if that is the case, in administering UK aid, if you are not talking to the organisations that have been working with the UK Government for years, in many respects, on projects around the world?

Dominic Raab: We are talking to those organisations. I do not know where you have got that from, sorry.

- Q114 **Chris Law:** To give you an example, you talked about scientific investment, but there is a cut of ODA from £245 million to £125 million, which scientists have described as having catastrophic consequences for the UK. That was published at the end of last month in the *Guardian*.

Dominic Raab: That related to the BEIS element of the ODA allocation. There is no doubt that if you read the *Guardian* line by line you will find



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someone to criticise us for something. That does not mean, as you suggested earlier, that we do not talk to partners and delivery partners. I can tell you that 4% of the UK ODA budget will be spent on science and technology². That covers the BEIS and DHSC elements to it, but one of the things we have done with our allocations at FCDO is to have an overarching strategic view—a double lock, if you like. We are committed to reaching our target of 2.4% of GDP spent on R&D across the UK economy by 2027. The FCDO is spending £253 million on R&D this year across the seven themes, and we do get feedback and evidence on the projects we run. I can give you three illustrations.

Chair: Foreign Secretary, because of time, would you mind writing to us with those?

Q115 **Chris Law:** Has there been an assessment made about the number of UK jobs that will be lost as a result of the cuts to the aid budget?

Dominic Raab: Of course we look at the partners, in particular the NGOs and the impact on them, but my job and the mandate for the job of the ODA spend is poverty reduction abroad. We are of course mindful of the impact on NGOs, but that is not our primary focus. Our primary focus is the impact that we have on the countries that we are legally mandated to support in poverty reduction. Of course we are mindful of it, but that cannot be our primary focus. We are here to serve the poorest and most vulnerable in the ODA priorities that I have set out, not, primarily at least, to look at the impact it has on jobs in UK NGOs or otherwise.

Q116 **Mrs Latham:** You mentioned a little earlier £30 million in the crisis fund reserve. Can you tell us exactly what you are going to do with that? In this financial year, 2020-21, the ODA crisis reserve had an allocation of £500 million, not £30 million. How on earth are you going to respond to any crisis with only £30 million in the bank?

Dominic Raab: Sorry, I did not quite catch that.

Q117 **Mrs Latham:** Could you tell me how you are going to deal with any crisis with only £30 million in the reserve, when, up until the end of this last financial year, the ODA allocation was £500 million? That is a huge cut. How are you going to deal with any crisis in that situation?

Dominic Raab: Thanks, Pauline; I understand. I think it is £900 million in the humanitarian space, but let me write to you.

Mrs Latham: No, I am talking about the crisis reserve.

Dominic Raab: I understand. By the way, in 2021 we will be the third highest bilateral humanitarian donor. The £30 million is an extra capacity that we will have that allows us to respond within 24 hours to a new emergency. It is different to what we have done previously. That £30

² In his subsequent letter to the Chair dated 7 May the Foreign Secretary confirmed that £583m of UK ODA is allocated to Research and Development for the financial year 2021/22, approximately six per cent of total UK ODA.



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million comes from the wider reserve that we have. If it is helpful, I am very happy to write to you with that detail.

- Q118 **Mrs Latham:** Could you write to us on that, because that is a very confusing answer? I do not really understand what you have said. Could you write and clarify exactly where the money is for crisis reserve?

The other thing is that I am being texted by NGOs at the moment, as we speak. You have said lots of people have been consulted. They do not believe they have. They have said, as far as planning is concerned, "It is like planning for the future by chucking darts at a board while blindfolded". I am afraid they do not seem to have the faith in your planning that you do. They also say, "Our projects are being salami-sliced month on month as extensions are given in lieu of a final decision, whilst KPIs remain the same". You may feel as if you are consulting, but clearly they do not feel you are. Maybe you could rectify that.

In your statement yesterday you talked about east Africa, but you redefined east Africa. You missed out Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. Why have you redefined it and therefore fudged the figures again?

Dominic Raab: On NGOs, you will always be able to find NGOs that will be critical at a time where we have financial pressures and we have had to make savings. I understand that. As I mentioned, legally but also morally our duty is to maximise the impact we have on the ground in the countries affected, rather than simply thinking about the allocations or the headcount in NGOs. We have consulted. At the beginning of this session I set out the detail of it, but I understand the pressure and the uncertainty it creates for NGOs; we understand that. We value those partnerships and they are very important.

We certainly have not redefined east Africa. I was giving an illustrative example of the countries that we are working with. What we have said—we have set it out in detail in the IR, and I can point you to the areas, but I am sure you have a copy of it—is that within the Africa strategy, you will see more of an emphasis on east Africa than perhaps previously. That does not mean that we will not continue to work with partners and work on the humanitarian things that we are doing elsewhere. In fact, if you look at the Sahel, we have fairly recently introduced UK troops to help with the stabilisation efforts in the Sahel. Overall, we see that the value added from the UK, and also our strategic interests, which are an important part of our development approach, are going to see a tidal shift in the direction of east Africa. I felt that from my visit to Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya earlier, but of course the other countries you mentioned are very important too.

- Q119 **Mr Sharma:** Good morning, Foreign Secretary. The £400 million allocation for girls' education represents almost a 50% cut against an education spend of £788.6 million in 2019. How does this fit with it being a strategic priority?



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Dominic Raab: First of all, that figure is incorrect. There is a saving that has had to be made but it is nowhere near the proportion that you have just described. It is less than 20%. On the Global Partnership for Education, for which we are hosting the replenishment summit with Kenya later on in the year, although we have not set out the detail of our pledge, I can reassure you that our pledge will represent a substantial increase on previous years. This year we will invest £400 million in over 25 countries, and obviously, not least given the GPE programme and the summit that we will co-chair, it will also be a key part of our G7 priorities. We are leading in what we do nationally, but we are also using our international convening power. As you know, the two global targets that we have, which we are working with the GPE on, are to get 50 million³ more girls into education by 2025 and 20 million more girls literate by the age of 10. We are absolutely committed to those international efforts.

- Q120 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, can I just clarify, as I did at the beginning, that the figures that we are working on are 2019 figures. The figures that Virendra Sharma has just quoted are your figures that we are quoting back again from 2019 to this current financial year.

Dominic Raab: Okay. They are not accurate in relation to this year or last year, but let me add that to my to-do list to write to you about, so that I can give you that clarity, which I am very happy to do.

- Q121 **Mr Sharma:** Chair, thank you for clarifying that. I must assure the Foreign Secretary that I am not questioning his knowledge of the subject. I have very little knowledge but I took, as the Chair said, the 2019 figures, and it was almost 50%, if not exactly 50%. That is where confusion could be. What do you think you can realistically achieve by spending £400 million, which I hope is the right figure for this year, on girls' education?

Dominic Raab: £400 million is a huge amount of money—eye-watering for many of our constituents. As I said, part of it is the projects that we work on. When I was in Addis Ababa, I went and had a look at the schools in action. We provide the support and the wraparound hygiene for young girls to get the education they need. I have seen the impact it makes on the ground. What also matters—again, we come back to the point about the merger and our G7 presidency—is the way that we can combine our aid spend, which is substantial, with our diplomatic and convening power to encourage others in this team effort to get 40 million more girls into education and 20 million more literate by the age of 10.

- Q122 **Mr Sharma:** Is there a risk that cuts to sexual and reproductive health programmes will undermine the impact of spending on girls' education? What is the holistic approach?

Dominic Raab: It is a fair challenge. I do not think it will, but when we look at girls' education—for example, when I was at the school in Addis Ababa—it is very important, particularly for teenage girls, that sanitary

³ See Q121.



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facilities are in place, because we know one of the issues that discourages girls from going to school around that time are things like that. I saw the facilities. It is obviously a sensitive issue, but it is something that we are very conscious of. The education piece is core, but the wraparound support for young girls and teenage girls in education is absolutely crucial as well.

There is no doubt that, as children have been out of education and out of school because of the pandemic, as they go back we are concerned about making sure that the girls go back and do not stay home. There is an extra tranche of money that we announced before these allocations, which is going to be focused on making sure that we get girls back into education as part of dealing with the pandemic.

Q123 **Theo Clarke:** Foreign Secretary, you talk passionately about the important role of girls' education. Given the Prime Minister's commitment to this area, I am pleased to hear the FCDO is prioritising funding for the replenishment of the GPE. Can I ask what the financial commitment will be? I know the GPE is asking for the UK to step up and donate £600 million. Given that we are hosting the G7 summit, surely that would be a strong example of UK leadership and encourage other donors to step up and address this important issue in the pandemic.

Dominic Raab: It is really important. I did a virtual meeting with Julia Gillard and the high commissioner from Kenya this week. I made clear that, although we are not yet in a position to announce the detail of it, our commitment will represent a significant increase on last year and recent years. Forgive me and bear with us while we set out the full detail, but it will be a significant increase.

Your point is exceptionally well made. We are hosting GPE. We want to send a really strong example. We want to create this virtuous cycle where we lead by example and encourage others to follow.

Q124 **Chris Law:** With the aid budget being drastically cut, how will the FCDO be able to fulfil its pledges related to climate finance?

Dominic Raab: Again, that falls squarely within one of the seven priorities that I mentioned. I can tell you that this year on climate and biodiversity we will be spending £534 million, and that maintains our commitment to double UK international climate finance to £11.6 billion between 2021 and 2025.

Bilaterally, to give you a bit more of a granular breakdown, the FCDO will deliver £534 million of climate and biodiversity programming. That is a doubling of the average annual spend between 2016 and 2020. Again, I hope that gives you reassurance. There is also a lot more that I could say about clean energy and nature.

Q125 **Chris Law:** I am asking about specific countries. For example, Colombia is facing great deforestation caused by inequality, a fragile peace process and ongoing drug cartels. Will there be cuts, for example, in Colombia,



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which needs our help most?

Dominic Raab: As I mentioned at the start, I have given you the headlines, but we are still working through the country-by-country plans. What is going on in Colombia is incredibly important. South America and Latin America is an important region for us. I am hoping to visit Colombia and Brazil relatively soon. As you will appreciate, particularly with Brazil, it is all Covid-dependent. As we do the country-by-country plans, we will look very closely at the granular detail, including the factors that you quite rightly mention.

Q126 **Chair:** Only 0.08% of current ODA spend goes to LGBT projects. Under Covid, the persecution of the LGBT community around the world has got even more acute. Are you ringfencing money specifically for those sorts of projects?

Dominic Raab: As I mentioned, the open societies piece is one of the seven core priorities. It fits under the open societies and conflict resolution category. £419 million is going into that category of funding. I am looking at it very carefully. You will know that the LGBT piece is not just an ODA piece; it is a wider foreign policy piece. We recently imposed Magnitsky sanctions in relation to the persecution of LGBT minorities in Chechnya. That is something I care passionately about. Again, I will look at the LGBT breakdown within the open societies spend, and I will keep that very closely in mind. With the action we have taken and the commitments we have made, I hope you will see that we do take it very seriously.

I try to keep the human rights bucket, if you like, as one coherent overarching strategic whole. That does not mean—whether it is media freedom and journalists who have come under huge pressure, from Myanmar to Belarus, or right the way through to LGBT rights—that there are not salient issues around each different sector of the human rights piece.

Chair: That is good to hear.

Q127 **Mr Sharma:** Foreign Secretary, if there is less ODA this year than last year, and you have signalled an increase in FCDO's bilateral ODA spend in Africa, including a major shift to east Africa, which countries will receive less ODA in 2021?

Dominic Raab: As I mentioned, we are still doing the country-by-country plans. It is not realistic to think that any country will be entirely immune from the savings we have had to make. I want to be honest about it. I have tried to give you the strategic criteria. As I have mentioned in response to a number of questions, we are still doing the country plans and the country-by-country allocations that follow from the thematic and regional allocations that I have set out.

Q128 **Mr Sharma:** Thank you very much for that. I am sure we will get the list later on or in the near future, detailing who is getting more and who is on



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the receiving end. In your written ministerial statement, you said there was a significant drop in allocations for countries not in Africa or the Indo-Pacific. What does this mean for Ukraine, a country that is in an ongoing conflict and on the brink of full-blown war, with ongoing humanitarian suffering?

Dominic Raab: We are obviously very concerned about the situation in Ukraine. We are supporting the humanitarian early-recovery activities in conflict-affected eastern Ukraine. There is a £40 million CSSF portfolio, which particularly covers malign influence and disinformation from Russia. There is a whole broad range of support we provide, right the way through from the ODA spend to the Operation Orbital training for Ukrainian troops. We have also imposed sanctions in relation to the Russian Government's activities.

I have spoken to the Foreign Minister recently, and I was out in NATO last week talking to all of our NATO partners, as well as the quint of the US, the UK, France, Germany and Italy, to make sure we are providing as much support as we can, given the whole range of challenges that Ukraine faces at the moment.

Q129 **Mr Sharma:** Why are you planning to spend anything in China?

Dominic Raab: As you will have seen, we have cut the ODA spend in China by 95%. There is £900,000 left, and that will go to the human rights and open societies programmes. I assume you would not want us to cut those at this time, given the pressures and the challenges in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

Q130 **Theo Clarke:** Foreign Secretary, by aligning UK aid with trade, is the integrated review prioritising the economic agenda of Global Britain over alleviating poverty in the world's poorest countries?

Dominic Raab: No. I am sorry but I have to disagree with you on that one. ODA is critically important, but working with our ODA partners, particularly in some of the poorest countries—again, the CDC role in this is critical—and trying to support them to achieve self-sustaining and independent economic development is absolutely one of our core aims. The trade piece is critically important to that. In terms of the integration piece, this is not just about the work of the FCDO; the work I am doing with Liz Truss at DIT is absolutely essential to this.

Again, I just do not see this in the siloed terms that some might suggest. I see it as absolutely integral. If we can encourage countries to trade their way, with some ODA support, to middle-income status and then get some velocity to further development, that is a hugely important thing. Of course, when you talk to developing countries—I know you have huge experience—that is what they want. It is important to do it in its own right, but also because that is the desire of many of the developing countries and partners with which we work.

Q131 **Theo Clarke:** Based on that answer, does that mean that programmes



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that focus on trade and economic development will be protected from cuts? You mentioned that you had recently visited Kenya; I also did a few weeks ago, in my role as trade envoy, and I saw first-hand the very excellent aid for trade programming such as TradeMark East Africa, which is doing exactly what you describe, helping British businesses export their goods and creating more jobs locally to tackle poverty. Does that mean these programmes will be protected going forward?

Dominic Raab: You are absolutely right, and Kenya is a great example of it. First of all, the trade and economic development bit of ODA has not been immune from the savings we have had to make. There are significant savings there. We certainly want to support the other ODA elements that either deal with the programmes that you have described or that help build up capacity.

The other programme that I am very fond of and that I always think of is the SheTrades programme, which supports 3,400 women-owned businesses in Commonwealth countries, which helps them to prosper from the trade agreements we are doing with their Governments. Again, that is another good example of the combination or the overlap.

Q132 **Theo Clarke:** Can I just clarify another point? In terms of embassies getting an update on the timeline for their centrally managed programmes' budgets, when will they be decided, so that the embassies know which programmes are surviving and which ones might not be?

Dominic Raab: We are already in the process of doing the country-by-country plans. They need to be set centrally so we have some coherence, but they are fully involved in that. I am not sure we are halfway through it, but we are in the middle of firming up those programmes.

Q133 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, do you have any indication of a timescale around when they will be firm and published?

Dominic Raab: It will be as soon as I can practically deliver it. I want to do it right and not quick. We have talked about how we will publish the data on it. We will follow the well-worn international development spending process. I do not want to rush it, not least because I want to give posts the ability, frankly, to push back. In a way, we have the strategic overview and we have the regional overview. We then consult, but I also need to make sure it is coherent and that we are not just being lobbied by posts. It is a consultative process. I then want to look at it overarching and in the round. I do not know whether it feels laborious; it is certainly painstaking. I am just conscious of the importance of getting it right, even more so because of the financial pressures we are under.

Q134 **Chair:** I understand all of that. I am very conscious that the poor are getting poorer and humanitarian disasters are getting worse, and we are not doing the amazing work that this country has always done and is well known for.



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Dominic Raab: I am sorry; I just do not agree. I know we have had to take a significant chunk out, but we are still spending £10 billion.

Chair: I understand that and we are very grateful for that, but in Syria, Foreign Secretary—

Dominic Raab: We are the third-largest ODA donor in the G7.

Q135 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, I will carry on speaking. In Syria, for 22 days our leading aid organisations have not had funding because Ministers have not signed it off. The reality is that, although it is fabulous and I am incredibly grateful and incredibly proud of this country's history and current status of providing for development, at the moment people are going hungry because we are not signing off cheques.

Dominic Raab: I am sorry; I do not accept that. I do not accept your headline view that we are not still maintaining our proud legacy and tradition of being generous by global standards. Nobody is going hungry because we have not signed cheques. That is just not true. Of course, as everybody would expect, both from the point of view of the oversight of taxpayers' money but also to maximise the impact, we have to have a proper process. We are going through it just as fast as we can. I respect your points and your strength of feeling on it, but I am afraid I do not agree with the characterisation that you have just put on it.

Q136 **Chair:** All I can say is that I have heard that first-hand from country directors of some of the big NGOs. They do not have any basis for making that up. I think they are very scared at the moment, because they believe that, if they put this information into the public domain, their situation with the FCDO might get worse. That is an awful relationship that we are into at the moment. When will we see the development strategy that we thought we were going to get last year?

Dominic Raab: On your first point, you can give me anonymous sources that you have, given your wide network. I appreciate that they are the people you talk to, and I know how seriously you take it. Our relationship overall with the NGO community, of course, is put under some pressure by the savings that we have to make, but, frankly, we have an excellent relationship. We really value our partners. We know this is difficult for them. As I mentioned before, legally and morally, our overarching duty is poverty reduction in the countries in which we are operating. I am not blind to, unconscious of or insensitive to the impacts it has on NGOs and their staff. In a way, that is why we are taking the time and the care to get this right.

In terms of the timing of the development strategy, we wanted to get the IR strategy, but we are working up the various different limbs and strands to it. I cannot give you a firm timeframe, but perhaps in my letter back to you I will try to give you a broad range for when we want to publish it. What I can tell you is that we will publish that development strategy.



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Chair: The Committee is very keen to help and support you with the development of that, if there is any way that we can be involved. As you say, we are all on this Committee because we really care about this. I would like to reiterate that we are very proud of what the UK does and what your Department does. You have some great people working with you.

Q137 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Foreign Secretary, I want to get back to the issue of managing the spending target. I am just wondering about the implications of the current economic volatility that there is in terms of FCDO's ability to manage the new target. What have been the challenges associated with managing such a big task in spending? How are we ensuring that we are still getting value for money?

Dominic Raab: There is no doubt about it; it is a tough old challenge. That is partly because it is a significant sum of money and partly because it is a time of a pandemic. Logistically, we do not have the same face-to-face contact with some of our partners, many of whom are digitally well equipped, but not all of them will be. It has been quite painstaking; it has been quite difficult. It is also quite fluid. That is why we have the supplementary estimates and that is why there is a structural mechanism for looking at how the spend plays out in practice as it is delivered.

On the other hand, we are used to it. We had to do the GNI review in 2020. Whilst, of course, we ended up making savings of £1 billion, we also, again, had a strategic approach. We learned a lot from that. There are always lessons to be learned. We will learn from this process. We have certainly sharpened our cutting edge in terms of governance and process. What really matters to us is not that it is bureaucratically elegant but that it delivers the best we possibly can for the seven strategic priorities that will reduce poverty.

There is never a perfect process in Whitehall, but we have made huge strides. As a result of that, we will deliver better bang for our buck. That is important for taxpayers, but most of all it is important for the value added. You can see that in some of the new things we are doing like COVAX and climate change.

Q138 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Following on from that, would the Government be open to perhaps spending more than 0.5% if they judged that spending less was compromising value for money at any point?

Dominic Raab: The 0.5% is what we are aiming at and targeting, but we are not going to get to a situation in which we are spending too much and not getting value for money or spending too little. The reality is that, within the allocations we have, we have to make sure it is going to the places that need it the most. Whenever I look at any spreadsheet, whenever I talk to my officials and whenever I talk to our NGO partners, that is the question I am asking myself.



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Q139 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, on the return to 0.7%, in our sleep we all parrot the phrase “when the fiscal situation allows”. I wonder what that actually means to you. Of course, it is a very ambiguous statement. Have you put some actual rules in place that you will be looking to abide by? It is very reassuring that the Government have now shifted to that commitment to return.

Dominic Raab: We always said that we would return as soon as possible. This was always a temporary emergency measure, because of the economic damage reaped by the pandemic. Every time I have looked at this, I have looked at whether we should have rules, principles, rules of thumb or criteria. I remember Gordon Brown’s six tests. I always worry that it will not do justice to the challenge that we have. I can reassure you that I have discussed it with the Chancellor and the Prime Minister together. We have looked at this very closely. As I said before, we will need to look at the fiscal and economic position in the round as we make steps to progress from what has been an exceptional crisis.

Of course, we will adhere to the Act; we will look and make sure we take the implications of the Act very seriously, including the mechanism for parliamentary accountability that is written into it. I am absolutely committed to that.

Q140 **Navendu Mishra:** Foreign Secretary, my question is regarding Oxfam. I am sure you will be aware that Oxfam has recently been given a clean bill of health by the Charity Commission and it has also been certified by the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative, although your Department has recently suspended it from bidding for Government funding earlier this month. Does this make you reconsider current regulation and oversight of the aid sector?

Dominic Raab: It is a great question. Let me just set out the facts on Oxfam, because it is quite a significant case. To answer your question, there is the regulatory framework, through the Charity Commission and the safeguarding measures we have in place. Without stymieing aid programmes and their effectiveness, I am always looking to be belt and braces with the safeguarding side of things.

You will be aware that the reporting in the *Times* that sparked some of the latest issues on 2 April related to a letter from a member of staff to the Oxfam management, which talked about allegations of fraud, corruption, sexual harassment, abuse, threats and intimidation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As you will know, we have gone back to signing off on allowing Oxfam to bid again for HMG funds, but at the time that Ministers did that, we had had reassurance from the Charity Commission that they were not concerned about any ongoing issues—any pending cases—as well as having reassurance about the original set of issues that were being addressed. Ministers did not have full information about the details of the ongoing cases.



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There are different arguments. The Charity Commission felt that they were being satisfactorily handled by Oxfam. I am not second-guessing that call. What I am saying is that, when I looked at the allegations, when they came to me, when Ministers became aware of them—I should say that they are only allegations; there is a due process for this—it included systematic fraud. The severity of some of the allegations, particularly around sexual exploitation, made me feel that I wanted to put a pause on it until those particular allegations were addressed.

Frankly, it is a belt-and-braces approach, because of, first, the severity of some of the allegations and, secondly, the fact the allegations were systemic. It was not just a case of the individual concerned but potentially broader. Oxfam, of course, has quite rightly appointed an independent investigator. I want to wait for the outcome of that and see what the findings are and also any remedial measures that are proposed. I appreciate that it is disruptive, but we have to take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously indeed. I will not just look at this as a tick-box exercise or take one or other regulatory body's view or say-so on it. I will look at the detail of it. That is what Ministers should do.

Q141 Navendu Mishra: Thank you, Foreign Secretary. You mentioned DRC. In addition to DRC, in the last couple of days a report about Oxfam in Iraq has also come forward, so it is not just one country; there are quite serious issues.

Staying with Oxfam, whistleblowers are absolutely vital to highlighting abuses not just at Oxfam but across the sector. This Committee has recommended that FCDO partners undertake an audit of whistleblowing practices to ensure that people who come forward are protected and that cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and intimidation are brought to light. Will you reconsider the Committee's recommendation on that?

Dominic Raab: I always take what the Committee says very seriously. I know I was asked about it the last time I was before the Committee. I have not changed my mind on it, but I am always interested in how we can finetune and sharpen our safeguarding activities.

I also just want to say, because it is only fair to say, that I know how seriously my officials take this. I know how seriously the Charity Commission takes this. We also need to have a recognition that the environment and conditions within which we operate, in often fragile countries with vulnerable people, mean that we will always, however good our processes are, be dealing with one or other set of claims and allegations. They must be absolutely rigorously checked, but it is in the nature of the work that we will have some of those claims.

What I would not want to do is to stymie either the sector or my officials that we do not still lean in to say, "We have to provide that aid and we have to do it safely and responsibly". I accept and have heard the argument, from the third sector but also from my officials, about the operating climate and environment within which a lot of this work takes



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place. I have a zero-tolerance approach to this, and my approach to Oxfam demonstrates that. I understand the environment within which the whole sector is working, and it is important for them to feel that we appreciate that.

- Q142 **Navendu Mishra:** Are you working with the authorities in countries such as DRC to strengthen their justice mechanisms and ensure that survivors have access to justice and support?

Dominic Raab: Yes. When I was a young Foreign Office lawyer many moons ago, I worked in the DRC. We have been working with capacity-building organisations in the justice sector there and in many other conflict and post-conflict countries. It is difficult. It is precisely because of the challenge in setting up justice mechanisms on a parallel with anything we would be used to in the UK, in Europe or in the west. It is really difficult. Of course, ideally what we want to do is strengthen the domestic justice, accountability and governance mechanisms. You are absolutely right: there is a baseline that we need to establish. Before it is established, we of course have to have all of the oversight mechanisms that you would expect us to apply both in FCDO but also in our relationships with partners. You are absolutely right about that.

- Q143 **Navendu Mishra:** Foreign Secretary, thank you for that. Could you please write to the Committee as progress is made on strengthening mechanisms in other countries?

Dominic Raab: Of course, yes.

- Q144 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, this is a random question, just because I am nosy: when you were a lawyer in the Department, did you ever have ambitions to become Foreign Secretary?

Dominic Raab: No, not at all. I worked under Jack Straw and Margaret Beckett. Funnily enough, I was a scrupulous civil servant. I always thought that my political ambitions had to be parked. I thought the restrictions were far greater than they were, but at that stage I was much more compelled by the vocation of foreign affairs and the good we all are committed to doing in the world rather than thinking about domestic party politics, if I am honest.

- Q145 **Chair:** Do you feel very proud of where you are now?

Dominic Raab: Yes, hugely proud. More than that, I am hugely proud of the team I have. When you think about the safeguarding issues, I had a meeting this week with the team about it. There was no defensiveness; we all wanted to get the right solution. This is a team that has worked under incredibly difficult circumstances. I have consular teams across the board that have done a hell of a job this year, including on the repatriation effort. On top of that, you have the merger and the SR. I am very proud of the teams we have and the character they have shown as well as the expertise they all bring.



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Q146 **Chair:** You have some really wonderful people. Could I stay with the theme of sexual abuse? One of the things that Mark Lowcock has recommended, which this Committee also supports, is to have an independent ombuds, because, as you alluded to, there is a massive power imbalance between donors, organisations and the people on the ground who they are there to partner and help. Unfortunately, abuse and exploitation are likely to occur. What are your views on having an independent third party who could oversee when there are complicated cases where perhaps the local legal system is not strong enough to intervene?

Dominic Raab: We all have experience of the Parliamentary Ombudsman. At a theoretical or principle level, I am attracted to it. Why? Because, frankly, we could give someone else the job of scrutinising all of that. I know it has been discussed extensively with donors since 2018. I know Mark is a big fan, but I have to say that it did not get a lot of support across donors. It has not generally seemed to garner a consensus. That is partly because there was not a clear vision for its remit or the technical details around how it would operate in practice. You would need a clearer consensus on that.

At the principle level, I am attracted to the idea, but I am not sure that the details have been fleshed out that would command the kind of consensus we would need or for it to be a workable and viable proposition in practice. I always try not to sit on the fence, but I have looked at this. I have asked the question, given the challenge we have in monitoring so many programmes where there is always a slew of claims coming in that we have to look at from a safeguarding point of view. I am happy to keep it under consideration.

Q147 **Chair:** That is appreciated. As you will be aware, the selection process for the UN Secretary General will be commencing in May. Will the UK make its support conditional on the candidates' ability to demonstrate how they will tackle sexual exploitation and abuse in the UN system?

Dominic Raab: Whether or not it is conditional I will not say, but that is certainly a pivotal part of any candidacy, absolutely.

Q148 **Chair:** Going on from that, a recent investigation found the Global Fund's governance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse was inadequate, and at least three UN agencies were implicated in sexual exploitation and abuse during the Ebola response in the DRC, as Navendu has indicated. Will the FCDO keep its commitment not to fund any multilateral organisation that has safeguarding procedures that are considered to be inadequate?

Dominic Raab: I do not know quite what the level of inadequacy would be, but, absolutely, I hope I have shown you, in the way that we have approached Oxfam, that I want to be belt and braces about this. I want us to have a zero-tolerance approach. Fundamentally, I want all of those partners—both the UN and the voluntary sector—for their own sake, and



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not from the point of view of being a critical donor, to get this right. The lawyer in me always wants the checks and balances in place to try to achieve that.

I have shown through Oxfam what my instincts are. Of course, it is ultimately a judgment call, as we have seen with Oxfam itself. Different people take different views on it. Indeed, the Charity Commission gave it a green light, and we relied on that, which is why you ultimately have to be willing to look at it, take what is inevitably a judgment call, and then be accountable to Parliament and to committees like yours for that judgment call.

- Q149 **Chair:** One of the things that keeps on frustrating us is UN officials using immunity or implied immunity to get away from any sort of investigation or disciplinary. If the UK could take quite a strong line—for example, withholding funds—it might make the organisation wake up a little bit to its responsibilities.

Dominic Raab: Yes, absolutely. Of course, any organisation or state can waive immunity, so I do not see why it is a manacle rather than a protection.

- Q150 **Chris Law:** What decisions, Foreign Secretary, have you made about the UK's planned ODA spend in Afghanistan for this financial year?

Dominic Raab: You will appreciate that it is quite fluid in Afghanistan because of the US announcement. I was out in NATO last week discussing it with both the US Defense Secretary as well as Secretary of State Blinken and our NATO allies. We will continue our support. There is £145 million next year. You will know that since 2001 we have provided £3 billion in development.

On the country allocation—I know we have not published them but this is important—we have protected the Afghanistan budget as much as possible. Within that, given the fluid situation we are facing, we will be watching it very closely. There will be some fluidity around it, but I would expect that to be within the envelope. I cannot see them getting less than the allocation we have provided. If anything, we may need to look at the facts and give them more.

More generally on Afghanistan, with the US decision and the NATO decision, our priorities are going to be around making sure our forces are protected beyond 1 May and making sure we can deal with the counterterrorism capacity that will inevitably be affected as troops draw down. On the same level of that, we have to make sure we can progress the parties, including the Taliban, through the peace process and secure the hard-won gains. That includes not just the military ones but the things we have done around particularly women's rights and the other development gains we have made in that country. I am very acutely conscious of the challenge we have, and we are making sure we provide the funds to support that.



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Q151 **Chris Law:** What does a military withdrawal mean for the humanitarian situation and development efforts in Afghanistan?

Dominic Raab: We have to use what levers we have with the Government and with the Taliban. One of those will be around the sanctions piece. We have to make sure that any easing up of the existing sanctions is predicated on the basic tenets of human rights and the programmes that we have been working so hard on, to provide not just a stable Afghanistan but a more inclusive one, including around women's rights.

Those are the levers that we have, but there is no doubt that the removal of troops will have an impact on some of that work. We have to try to work with our partners, because it is a US decision and a NATO decision, to try to bank the gains. The truth is that there will only be peace in Afghanistan through a political process ultimately. We have to bed into that peace process, as and when it makes progress, those key elements that are part of our programme, particularly on women's rights.

Q152 **Chris Law:** If I could turn my attention to eastern Ukraine, which is a place I visited a couple of years ago to see for myself the challenges on the ground, I wonder what assessment you have made of the humanitarian needs of communities in the region, should the situation escalate.

Dominic Raab: As your question points out, it depends on what happens. At the moment, as well as the CSSF funding that we provide, we are focused on giving as much reassurance to the Ukrainians as we possibly can right across the piece, from the kind of work you are talking about through to the Operation Orbital training of Ukrainian forces. We are trying to send a very clear message to Russia. We are also trying to avoid an escalation of tensions or indeed Russia being allowed or given the pretext, as unjustifiable as it may be, to make its incursion further into Ukraine a self-fulfilling prophecy. Those are three rather difficult priorities to square, but that is what we are focused on. In fairness, having just got back from NATO last week, that is a priority for NATO partners and indeed others beyond NATO.

Q153 **Chris Law:** I welcome your earlier remarks about safeguarding financial support for tackling disinformation in Ukraine, which we know has been an enormous issue. I just want to know whether there is scope for increasing current levels of support to humanitarian programmes in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the current climate.

Dominic Raab: We will certainly keep it under constant review. That is why we have the crisis reserve. More generally, of course, we are watching very vigilantly what the situation on the ground is.

Q154 **Chris Law:** Thank you, Foreign Secretary. That has been really helpful. Sir Philip, I feel like you have been left out of a lot of this, so I have a few specific questions for you. How much did you spend on each thematic area that you identify in the written ministerial statement last financial



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year?

Sir Philip Barton: The money is not broken down that way. At risk of repeating myself, there is material in the supplementary estimates and there is both what the Foreign Secretary said to the Committee around the 2020 GNI exercise and what we have said today about the future and how the money will appear in public going forwards.

- Q155 **Chris Law:** Could you tell us in some detail what the terms “financial transactions”, “programmes with cross-cutting themes” and “ALBs, international subscriptions and other fixed costs” mean?

Sir Philip Barton: Taking those in turn, financial transactions are things like, for example, the money the FCDO provides to CDC, which are investments and therefore are a liability, rather than a grant. “Financial transaction” is a technical term, which changes the way it is accounted for under the Government rules. “ALBs” are arm’s-length bodies. There is a broad range of those that the Department has, ranging from the British Council through to things like the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. Some of the money they are provided by the Department is ODA. “International subscriptions” will be things like our contributions to the UN and other international organisations.

I may have missed one of the terms on your list, so I am happy to write to you with more detail on all of these things to make sure you have the technical explanations. Those are the headlines on the things that you said.

- Q156 **Chris Law:** If you could put a little bit in writing, it would be helpful for us. The last one that I mentioned was “programmes with cross-cutting themes”. If I could just move on, could you tell us what proportion of the ODA budget was devoted to each of these categories of spending in the last three years?

Sir Philip Barton: I am sorry. I would need to look at that. I do not have those figures on a three-year basis at my fingertips.

Chair: If you could write to us, that would be very helpful.

- Q157 **Chris Law:** Lastly, the biggest item of all, by far, is “programmes with cross-cutting themes”. Why is it not possible for you to break down this spending so that we can see exactly how much goes on your seven priorities?

Sir Philip Barton: I am going to repeat myself. As I said at the beginning, the Foreign Secretary set out at the end of the exercise last year what the outcomes were and set out in the written ministerial statement yesterday what the forward look is. That information comes out in the normal way. That has not changed. The Foreign Secretary committed earlier to writing to you on how that works in practice.

- Q158 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, can I bring you back to Chris’s question about Ukraine? Looking at the written ministerial statement, it seems that the



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real hit in terms of cuts is for the rest-of-the-world programmes, which look as though they are down from £4.3 billion in 2019 to £1.4 billion for 2021-22. Ukraine would be one of those countries. DevTracker has Ukraine down as £0 for this financial year. Is that something that is likely to change or is that situation going to continue?

Dominic Raab: I can write to you with the detail, but, as I said to Chris, we have the allocations, particularly around CSSF, that will apply. There is an emergency reserve. Quite a lot of the support that is provided is not ODA. I mentioned Operation Orbital, and there are other things. I am very happy, if it would be helpful, given the interest in Ukraine, to set out very clearly the detailed funding that is available for Ukraine.

Chair: That is fantastic; thank you.

- Q159 **Mr Sharma:** Foreign Secretary, who in the FCDO is co-ordinating the UK's response to the ongoing atrocities in Tigray? Who has ultimate responsibility: the Minister for Africa or the Minister for Human Rights?

Dominic Raab: The Foreign Secretary does. I was out in Ethiopia earlier this year. I went up to Gondar to see for myself the humanitarian response that is based there and goes into the Tigray region. I saw Prime Minister Abiy as well as Ministers. There has been some progress, but clearly we are very concerned. As the responsible Minister, I would say there are three priorities. The first is securing greater humanitarian access. They have gone from a consent basis to a notification basis, which is progress, but we need to make sure we secure unfettered access.

The second thing is going to be making sure that there is accountability for the reports of human rights abuses. Prime Minister Abiy has made a range of commitments in that regard, and of course the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is planning investigations in relation to that. We will support both of those efforts.

Thirdly, if I look in the round at the situation in Tigray and the politics of Ethiopia, which has long centred around the relationship between the regions and the centre, it is going to be very important that there are elections not just in Ethiopia but in the Tigray region in order for there to be political dialogue between the centre and the Tigray region. Again, that is something that Prime Minister Abiy undertook to me personally. I hope that gives you a sense of the strategy.

- Q160 **Mr Sharma:** Following on from there, how are you using the expertise within the conflict unit to actively seek a settlement to the conflict in Tigray? How are you applying lessons learned from other atrocity situations to the conflict in Tigray?

Dominic Raab: Obviously, we have the expertise that can back up those three different areas, if there is a call or a need for it: accountability for human rights abuses, humanitarian support and electoral support. If you are suggesting that we could go in and mediate, Prime Minister Abiy has



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to be willing to entertain that. Among all the interlocutors, we have had a very close bilateral relationship over many years, given the history of the country. We have talked a lot to the regional partners and the regional countries as well as the United Nations. We have urged them to engage with the Ethiopian Government and consider what more can be done.

Ultimately, the Government of Ethiopia have to be willing to engage. Of course, there are also regional implications, in particular the presence of Eritrean troops. Notwithstanding all the sensitivities, I have to say that, in the three areas I mentioned, Prime Minister Abiy was willing to engage constructively, and made various assurances and, obviously, we need to make sure they are delivered. Of course, as you will find often in these situations, the Government of Ethiopia regard this as a civil matter—a domestic matter—not one that is right for internationalisation. I personally think that listening to the advice of regional friends and partners could help resolve the matter, but, ultimately, the Government of Ethiopia have to take the same view.

Chair: We are publishing our inquiry's report into Tigray next week. We feel very passionately that it is the first real test of your new Department, because reaching a peaceful solution would seem to combine development and diplomacy. If there is any way we could get a quick response back, we would be most grateful, just because we want to try to keep the international focus on it.

Q161 **Theo Clarke:** Foreign Secretary, the Government's website says that bilateral ODA spend in 2019 accounted for 67.5%. I am interested to know, since the merger, what the balance is between spending on multilaterals versus bilaterals, and which it is that you are choosing to prioritise and why.

Dominic Raab: It is a great question. There are arguments for both. You will see this when the data is published. As you will know, the argument for multilateral spend is that the accountability mechanism is assured, you have the economies of scale and, to some degree, you have the expertise. My feeling is that there is also very strong and perhaps underrated value in the bilateral spend, because it allows you to tailor niche support for areas that otherwise might fall between the cracks of the multilateral spend. I can see the value of both.

I have a niggling instinctive desire to do more in the bilateral space, but, as you will know, the Treasury has strong views on this as well. Is there an inching towards doing more bilateral? Probably, yes. That is because we have a bespoke offer in the UK. For example, in Africa the UK is more liberal when it comes to free trade than the Europeans. We do business with greater integrity certainly than the Russians and, I would argue, the Chinese, but we also have this force-for-good agenda. That is a package and it is very compelling. There is a real case for us being able to put together bespoke bilateral packages in those sorts of contexts. Ultimately, it is a balance.



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Q162 **Navendu Mishra:** Foreign Secretary, could I go back to climate finance? The UK's provision on climate finance is considered world-leading, and a need for more money focused on adaptation finance has been acknowledged by COP 26 president Alok Sharma, but this funding must be in addition to the aid budget rather than cutting into it. With an already reduced aid budget, increasing climate finance from existing ODA funds will reduce spending in other vital areas such as health and girls' education. We are in the middle of a global pandemic, but both are very important and both should be properly supported. Why can additional climate funding for low-income countries not be supported outside of existing funding?

Dominic Raab: I certainly agree with you: both are important, and they are both reflected in our seven strategic priorities. We would always want to put more money into one or the other, but you will understand the financial pressures we are under; I have explained them at length. I can reassure you that we are maintaining our commitment to double the UK's international climate finance to achieve £11.6 billion by 2025. Rest assured on that front.

Q163 **Chris Law:** Foreign Secretary, when we last met at the International Development Committee, I asked you a straight question about whether, as a former lawyer, you were concerned that you would break the law by reducing the aid budget without changing legislation, and you said you were not. I want to ask you this question: are you planning on bringing a vote before the House so that the House can actually speak, debate and vote on this? If not, are you delaying it because of the G7 summit? It might bring embarrassment, given the volume of opposition in the House of Commons to this cut to the world's neediest people.

Dominic Raab: We are not delaying anything because of the G7 summit. If that were the case, we would not have put out these allocations. We will act in line with the International Development Act. As you will know, the Act itself explicitly envisages that there may be circumstances in which the 0.7% target is not met. There is an accountability process within it. The question is around what the parameters of that are. I am looking at that very carefully, and of course I will inform the House and this Committee of how we intend to proceed in due course. I am very sensitive to the issue, but of course we are not going to behave in any way unlawfully. You would not expect me, as a former Foreign Office lawyer, to advocate that.

Q164 **Chris Law:** No, I appreciate that, but nevertheless I would like to know whether you are considering a debate and a vote in the House. We have asked for this repeatedly. It has been a long time since you made the announcement of the cut. There is very strong opposition. There is a big requirement, simply in terms of the democratic process, to have that discussion in the House. Are you looking to do this? It is a straight "yes" or "no" answer.



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Dominic Raab: There is no legal requirement for us to do it. We publish the details, as is always the way, through the transparency mechanism I have described. Of course, there will be debates on finance Acts. Parliament controls its own business, and there is nothing to stop backbenchers from organising a vote on anything they wish, including votes on any motions they wish.

Q165 **Mrs Latham:** I am sorry if I have missed this, because I have had questions in the Chamber, one of which was about the reduction from 0.7% to 0.5%. One of your pillars is women and girls' education particularly, but there is a lot more that women and girls need, not just education. They need security when they go to collect water; water and sanitation is very important for women and girls. They need security when they go to collect firewood for their fires. There are all sorts of reasons why we need to spend more money on women and girls to protect them from rape and abuse.

We have also done a couple of reports now on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. That is very important. We have recommended that money is spent on ensuring that all organisations have a policy on that so that we know that when women and girls are abused—and they are abused regularly—people can be held to account. Has that budget been slashed?

Dominic Raab: I certainly support what you are saying about wraparound care for girls' education. I am not sure whether you were here before, but I mentioned that, for example, when I was in Addis Ababa at the school I visited that benefits from our ODA, I did not just see the teaching, the infrastructure and the books; I also saw the sanitation, particularly for teenage girls, in education. We are absolutely aligned on that.

I was not quite clear on the tranche of funding you were referring to in the last element of your question. Can you repeat it, please? I know it is around safeguarding. We had a series of questions around Oxfam and safeguarding. I just want to check that it is not something I have already answered.

Q166 **Mrs Latham:** You may have, because I have been in and out. We have always recommended that when girls and women need safeguarding, as they do all the time because of the Oxfam scandal and all the others, a sum of money should be put on one side to be able to investigate these issues and make sure that whistleblowers are protected and that they come forward. Is that money, which should be in every budget for every NGO, being slashed out of the budget so that they cannot do that for women and girls? It is such an important thing. We see that women and girls are constantly being abused.

Dominic Raab: You will be able to see in the transcript that I talked at length about the measures and the approach we are taking to safeguarding. It is a crucially important bit of work. Our focus has been



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on the requirements we place on our partners. You may have seen that I recently suspended Oxfam's funding again while, in fairness, they conduct an independent investigation in relation to some of the fraud claims but also the sexual harassment claims in relation to the DRC. I will want to see both the findings of the report but also any recommendations on remedial measures.

I am not sure whether we earmark or condition specific funding to particular areas of the checks that they have in place. To be honest with you, we would normally look at safeguarding and not provide them any funding in the first place unless we had the assurance that it was robust enough, rather than micromanage their budgeting process. Let me take a look at that again, given that it is quite an esoteric but perfectly reasonable question that you are asking. I will come back in the round-up letter we do and see whether we provide a specific strand of funding on safeguarding, over and above the programme spend they get.

Q167 **Mrs Latham:** While you are looking at that, could you also look at the recommendation we have had for an ombudsman for safeguarding and for women and girls?

Dominic Raab: I did answer that earlier.

Chair: The Foreign Secretary's door is open on this, and we are very grateful for that. Foreign Secretary, Pauline is right: when we do push NGOs around having safeguarding policies and the support for victims and survivors, they often say that it is because the FCDO will not fund them for it. It is very good to hear from your point of view that this should be an absolute core for any project going forwards.

Foreign Secretary, you have been, as ever, incredibly generous with your time and the information you have given us. I am sorry that we have given you such a long list of things to write to us on, but it is appreciated. We appreciate all that you do and all that your team does, but, again, we are very concerned about the cuts, the strategy behind the cuts and how best to mitigate the problem. I am afraid we are going to continue pushing you on that theme, but today, both to yourself and to Sir Philip, thank you so much for your time; it is really appreciated. Thank you very much to the Committee and the team.