



International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Parliamentary Strengthening, HC
704

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Members present: Sir Malcolm Bruce (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Hugh Bayley; Fabian Hamilton; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy; Sir Peter Luff; Mr Michael McCann; Fiona O'Donnell; Chris White

Questions 1-55

Witnesses: Greg Power, Director, Global Partners Governance, Alina Rocha Menocal, University of Birmingham and Overseas Development Institute, and Charles Chauvel, former New Zealand MP, currently an official of the United Nations Development Programme, gave evidence

Q1 Chair: Good morning. Welcome and thank you very much for coming in to this first evidence session we are having on parliamentary strengthening, which I guess you could say is something the Committee has a particularly direct interest in, being parliamentarians ourselves. I just wonder for the record if you could introduce yourselves.

Charles Chauvel: Hello. I am Charles Chauvel from the United Nations Development Programme.

Alina Rocha Menocal: I am Alina Rocha Menocal from the University of Birmingham.

Greg Power: I am Greg Power, the Director of Global Partners Governance.

Q2 Chair: As I say, thank you very much for coming in. You made the comment in your evidence, Alina, that “along with political parties, parliamentary development assistance remains the small component of democracy assistance. A key reason for this is that work with both political parties and parliaments has been deemed as too politically sensitive.” That may be the nub of a problem—I do not know—but can I ask all of you: why do you think it is important to work with parliaments in developing countries, particularly from a donor point of view?

Alina Rocha Menocal: Yes, it is essential for the international community to engage both with parliaments and with political parties. The reason that I stated in my submission that the international community has been reluctant to engage is that it is felt—and perhaps correctly so—that both parliaments and parties clearly are very political organisations and

function in very political ways. For a long time, even though this has been changing a little bit and DFID has been at the forefront of trying to change ways of working, international assistance tended to look at democracy assistance in a rather technical way, looking for very technical ways of supporting, for example, elections and civil society and receding from the more deeply rooted political issues that are at stake. As a result, now there is awareness of the need to take politics seriously and there has been a bit of a greater interest in engaging with parliaments. I would say that it is essential, because democracy strengthening is a whole, and just focusing in silos on specific things like elections or civil society does not quite work. We need to engage with the whole gamut of organisations and institutions, and parliaments and parties are essential to that.

Q3 Chair: Perhaps I could put the question to Charles and then to Greg. I do not know whether you call yourself a gamekeeper-turned-poacher or the other way round, but you are a parliamentarian who now works for UNDP. The evidence we got from UNDP shows an awful lot of work and a lot of resource, but it does appear quite often to be technical and technocratic. Is that fair? Could you give a comment to what Alina has said?

Charles Chauvel: You have to cut your cloth to the particular circumstances. The global offering that UNDP has, and which I am currently responsible for, has been moving much more to recognise that this is an inherently political activity. We recently restructured our offering in the headquarters so that my team is now called the Inclusive Political Processes Team. We are responsible for support to elections, parliaments, constitutional processes, political parties and civil society. Our most successful programming has recognised that you have really got to pursue thematic development issues with MPs—for example our collaboration with Climate Parliament, where we have worked in 14 countries to upskill MPs on the particular complexities of climate change, resulting, for example, in Indian MPs applying parliamentary tactics to get their renewables budget doubled during the budget debate and the estimates process.

The future direction of this work is inevitably political. It is necessarily going to involve pursuing these thematic development issues—climate change; HIV; sustainable growth—but you cannot do that in every context. In a crisis context or an immediately post-crisis context, where a lot of our work takes place—South Sudan was one of the examples that one of the submissions used—you are really building institutions from the ground up post the post-conflict dialogue, and you have really got to start with the basics. That is why the political economy and the context is really everything.

Q4 Chair: Greg, DFID say that they take it very seriously, although they do not spend a huge amount of money on it—although I think quite a lot of it goes to UNDP. How does DFID compare with other donors, in your view? Do you think they spend enough and spend it in the right way?

Greg Power: Just to touch on the first question that you asked in terms of the importance of parliamentary strengthening, parliaments—I am playing to an audience here that knows this already—are central to most of DFID's objectives. From poverty reduction through to conflict resolution, parliaments are central to that process, but they are often missed by DFID and other international agencies because they are difficult to deal with. Unlike any other organisation or institution, there is no one person in charge of a parliament. The speaker will control certain elements of parliamentary procedure; the leader of the

dominant party will have a certain role; but there is never any one person in charge. Parliaments are complex and they represent shifting coalitions of interests, so therefore they are more difficult to deal with than the executive.

Secondly, parliaments do not implement anything. Parliaments are there to scrutinise, to legislate and to call to account. It is the executive that implements actions. Therefore, DFID and other international agencies have a tendency to work with the executive side of government in order to get things done. That is not to take away from the fact that parliaments are central to all of the issues that we are talking about.

In terms of DFID and other donor agencies and their approach to this, all the donor agencies have missed the fact that parliaments are potentially very strong allies in all of their objectives. DFID needs to be given credit for pushing ahead on the political economy analysis work that it has done over the last 10 years. As Charles has indicated, there is a recognition that politics matters. There is still a massive gap between the strategic thinking that is being done about how to address politics and what happens on the ground. The realities of politics are difficult for all donor agencies to deal with, and time and again you see very good political analysis but a reversion to technical support because politics is difficult.

Charles Chauvel: If I may, one of the reasons for that is that some things are more difficult to measure than others. Donors are always having to report on very short timeframes. As Greg says, political parliamentary development work takes a much longer time.

Chair: I am going to stop you because we are going to come to that anyway; we might explore that a little further.

Q5 Hugh Bayley: For as long as I can remember people have been saying the problem with donors funding parliamentary strengthening work is they run shy of politics, but I would like you, Greg, to say what you mean by politics. What is the kind of politics that donors find it uncomfortable getting involved with? What would your suggestions be about how they should change their strategy on parliamentary strengthening to engage with the uncomfortable realities of deals struck between party whips or oppositions being frozen out and these kinds of things?

Greg Power: In terms of the fundamental question about politics, there has tended to be an assumption that parliamentary strengthening, like democracy assistance, is a good thing so therefore everybody is bound to support it, but if you are strengthening or reforming a parliament, it means that you are altering the balance of power between the executive and the legislature. Also, within the parliament itself, with any reform there are going to be some winners and some losers, and it is addressing the incentive structures at work in any particular parliament and couching the arguments so that you play to those incentive structures.

As some of you will know, I was a special adviser to the Leader of the Commons here, which is where I learnt an awful lot about politics and political reform, and during that process I went and saw the chief whip in the Irish parliament, because they had just pushed through a whole series of reforms in one go. I asked him how he did it, and he looked me squarely in the eye and said to me: “You have to make sure everybody gets

something”. That is base politics, but it is true. The first reaction of a politician or a member of staff to any reform that you put forward will be, “How does this affect me?” and that will then shape how they perceive the reform itself.

That is difficult to deal with and you need implementers who can engage with those political sensitivities and understand them without necessarily getting caught up in them. There has to be a very clear objective as to the need to strengthen the parliament as a whole, to play with those incentive structures, but not necessarily to get caught up in them.

Q6 Hugh Bayley: Can I, before the others come in, just pose one other thought? The principal job of a legislature is to legislate and to scrutinise the executive, and the way more often than not that the executive limits the power of a legislature in developing countries is to limit the cash they have available for research, for well-trained clerks, for public relations. Why do donors not, therefore, see it necessary, if they are giving £100 million a year in budget support to a government, to give £1 million a year in budget support to a parliament?

Greg Power: There are examples of projects—I am not sure whether to name one or not.

Hugh Bayley: Yes, please do.

Greg Power: I will leave it for the moment. There is one project in particular I am thinking of that was very good. The analysis of what was wrong with the parliament and democracy more generally was exceptionally good. One of the intentions was to give the parliament more money, but the executive fundamentally objected to this and the donor was not strong enough to resist that pressure from the executive. The parliament would have given the executive a harder time; it would have made life more difficult for the executive. That is the reality of politics, which donor agencies are often reluctant to address, for understandable reasons.

Alina Rocha Menocal: If I may come in on this question of what the politics are and what it looks like—this is true not only of parliamentary support and political-party support but more generally for democracy support—there is a tendency from the international community to look at these as idealised models of change and a nice, linear sequencing that will get you to the perfect parliament and the perfect party. That really takes away the political nature of the work that happens with these institutions. One of the metaphors that we use in the submission that we made is whether work with parliaments should be seen as fixing the car or engaging with the driver and helping to understand the driving conditions around the driver. You can have a very nice set-up formally that has perfect rules on paper and the perfect committees and all of that, but if you do not understand the power dynamics that drive the people who populate the organisation, you miss out. When we talk about understanding the politics, it does not mean by any means being biased or taking sides, but really just understanding what it is that drives the different parliamentarians to act the way that they do. Who are they accountable to? Does their political future depend on the party or on voters? That will dictate, in a way, how they behave—whether they focus more on constituency work or on public goods more broadly because their party commands that. Those kinds of incentives driving that are very important.

In terms of what it means to take this seriously, again I would emphasise that DFID has been at the forefront of trying to engage more seriously with the politics and at the

strategic level has done quite a bit of work. It is in translating this that it gets much more difficult, because it does really require fundamentally shifting the way that donors work in these settings, concentrating really on brokering and facilitating spaces for engagement among people who may not otherwise come together rather than the donors seeing themselves as purveyors of funds and purveyors of technical assistance. It does require being comfortable with the more political nature of things and engaging with the incentive structures, which may be not black and white but a bit grey in the middle.

Charles Chauvel: Just very briefly, the point about the ideal of an operationally independent legislature is essential. It is one of the principles that UNDP operates on. Whenever UNDP is negotiating the United Nations Development Assistance Framework—the document that governs our assistance framework in a particular country—it is negotiating always with the executive. Whereas part of that framework there is a parliamentary strengthening programme, it is always an ideal to press for operational independence for the legislature so that it can develop in its own way.

Q7 Hugh Bayley: Just one last point: Greg, what is your assessment—here is a bit of peer review we are asking for—of UNDP’s work?

Greg Power: That is deeply unfair, but—

Chair: The point is Charles is saying that things have changed, but nevertheless, reading the evidence, there is a lot of technical work there. The question is about the politics, or the attitude towards politics.

Greg Power: Yes. I would like Charles to comment on this, but the UNDP has a particular problem with dealing with the implications of political interventions. It is understandably nervous about not being seen to support one side or another. Within any large organisation, that creates an aversion to risk, which has hampered some UNDP projects that did have very good political analysis but where following it through was more difficult, because by making the parliament stronger you were going to make the government slightly weaker because it was going to be held to account more.

Chair: Right of reply.

Charles Chauvel: I think what Greg says is generally fair. When you are ubiquitous, which we are, you do what you can in the jurisdiction that you are working in. In some jurisdictions we have negotiated a great deal of freedom to act politically; in others it is extremely difficult and you do what you can to strengthen the institution within the confines that you face.

Alina Rocha Menocal: If I may come in for one second so as not to put Charles on the spot here, something that we noted in our evidence is that the lessons that have emerged on why parliamentary support has not been as effective as it could be have been the same for the past 15 years or so across the board for all donors. This is a real challenge not just for the UNDP but for donors in general. There are some little efforts that are happening at the margins with this idea of taking politics more seriously to do demand-led work rather than just supply-led work and to have longer term horizons. We have found that the organisations that can most easily adopt lessons learnt and act on them tend to be organisations that are smaller, more nimble and also have longer term prospects for

funding and do not have to function on the basis of two-year or three-year projects, project by project by project, which demands constant relaying of results.

Chair: That is helpful. That leads into the next question.

Q8 Jeremy Lefroy: The ODI in its submission says that “the focus on showing quick results from short-term projects makes aid less cost effective and efficient in the longer term ... This highlights the acute need to work with aid agencies to find more appropriate ways to show results within complex areas of support such as parliaments, and to have a higher tolerance for risk and acceptance for setbacks.” Is that not really just special pleading? What I mean by that is: is it not just giving your excuses up front and saying, “We need the money; however, it is going to be very difficult and it will take a long time, so we are quite likely to fail or not to get the results”?

Alina Rocha Menocal: A big problem is related to the results agenda in the way that it is currently executed, because there is very little tolerance for risk. If you go to any kind of private entity that is making an investment elsewhere, they will have a greater threshold of tolerance for risk. I believe firmly that you need to have benchmarks to figure out what results you are aspiring towards, but focusing on quick, tangible, visible results in the short term tends to favour focusing on the form of things rather than the substance, so you can end up having 15 workshops in two years and you have met your target, rather than figuring out if those workshops had any kind of traction and made any kind of difference. One of the things that we quote in the paper is that this constant pressure for results has led a lot of donors and implementing agencies to focus on doing things right following democratic accountability structures rather than to focus on the right things, which are much more transformational and do take time and may not work in the short term.

Q9 Jeremy Lefroy: What are the right things?

Alina Rocha Menocal: The right things are to try to focus not just on fixing the car and having a perfect set of formal rules that you pass in parliament and now everybody knows how to supposedly run a committee or draft a bill, but to engage with the incentives of these people in parliament. Also, this leads back to working explicitly with political parties as well so that they can then figure out how to work collectively together from inside to bring about change. That is very hard to quantify or to tangibly test. How do you know that you have brokered a successful relationship between members of parties who would never have talked to one another and suddenly are working together in parliament to pass a bill? That is extremely important but very difficult to put your finger on. That is the kind of thing that needs to be more emphasised.

Greg Power: Just to come in on the question and some of Alina’s comments, there were almost two dimensions to your question. One was about the timescale; the other was what you actually do. In terms of the timescale, there is an assumption that this can happen quickly—that you can set up a party system or a parliamentary system within the space of one electoral cycle. That is not going to work. It is going to take several electoral cycles for the party system to bed down, especially when you have transitioned from an authoritarian regime with very little history of parliamentary culture. Your second question was: what are the right things? The answer is it depends. This work is highly contingent, as is all politics. It requires a degree of trying and failing.

With our work, we often start by trying to do half a dozen different things, knowing that a number of them are going to fail. That is not a reason for not doing them in the first place, because if the situation changes slightly in a month or six months, they will work. You can try and fail and try and fail and try and fail, and then the fourth time you try it will work because something has changed within the political context to make it work. As I say, there is a degree of risk aversion. For implementers like us, but also for aid agencies, you have to hit the indicators, especially in terms of spending money—the indicators that are set out in a logframe. Once you have got those indicators there, as we know from Government here, everything is geared towards hitting those indicators. If you get the wrong indicators you end up doing the wrong things, and it often takes you away from what you were trying to achieve in the first place.

Q10 Jeremy Lefroy: DFID sometimes seems to have problems in working with parliaments in some countries. Is it possible to do effective work when there are perhaps not necessarily problems but factors such as high turnover of MPs or a fairly weak opposition? Can you think of examples where that has occurred and where, effectively, DFID has been unable to work or their work has been ineffective?

Charles Chauvel: The situation you describe is an excellent example of the sort of place where you are still building structures, institutions and a culture of accountability and where you need to work on strengthening the administration and the committee system, and having really good orientation programs so that when there is a turnover of MPs you have still got a good level of knowledge embedded in the MP base when they take over. It would be great to be able to do the politics in all places, but, as my colleagues have said, there are some jurisdictions where you just have to concentrate on the basics and where later on hopefully you will be able to do more. Again, it comes down to the political economy of the place.

Q11 Fiona O'Donnell: We have had in a number of our submissions criticisms that DFID—not just in this area of its work—has a preference for awarding very large contracts, which are often then subcontracted to the groups that maybe we could have engaged with directly. I wonder first, Greg, if I could ask you, on the question of competition: do you think we should be opening up this process to more competition? Would it improve parliamentary strengthening work if smaller groups could have contracts?

Greg Power: I have to declare an interest here, in that we are a small organisation delivering this sort of work, so I am bound to say yes, DFID should give us more work. On the point that Alina made about engaging with politics, it tends to be the smaller, nimbler and more agile organisations that can do that. In the large organisations, with the bureaucracy that is there, you have a constant tension between the people in the field who want to respond to political events as they are occurring and the people at the centre whose job it is to assure quality and that you hit certain organisational standards—and that is entirely understandable.

In terms of the procurement process that DFID runs itself, again, it is the political economy—the incentives of the aid organisation itself. They have a lot of money to spend and a limited number of people to spend it, so therefore they tend to contract out very large projects to people who can take that management burden off DFID. The problem is

you end up with large organisations that do not necessarily have any innate parliamentary expertise running the programmes, and they therefore replicate all the problems that we have described about running technical programmes and not engaging with politics. Despite the fact that the analysis might be excellent, their ability to deliver it is limited by the fact that they are a large organisation and you have layers of bureaucracy and you do not get that nimbleness or that innate political understanding.

Q12 Fiona O'Donnell: Charles, I wonder how you respond to that criticism that there is too much going to your organisation, but also to the criticism that there is insufficient monitoring of UNDP, in particular by the UN Board of Auditors, who talked about your delays on projects and poor project management.

Charles Chauvel: When you are an organisation that has the scale and size of UNDP there are always going to be issues in implementation, but we are also the most transparent multilateral player in the aid environment. Again, in this area there is the ideal and there is what is do-able. It would be great to see a whole lot of small, nimble players working politically in a number of different environments. The reality is in a lot of partner countries it simply would not be permitted by the government in power, and so you have got to have a negotiated relationship. We try to maintain a reasonable relationship with host governments, and that tends to give us some space to be able to work, for example, in the parliamentary area. We do subcontract a lot of our work to small, nimble players, as it happens, and we tend to be very pleased with the results. To posit the possibility, though, that they could simply go into certain difficult political environments and contract directly, given the political realities, would be, as I think DFID knows, a fantasy.

Q13 Fiona O'Donnell: Do you want to add anything, Alina? Do you think this is more about DFID being risk averse?

Alina Rocha Menocal: Not on this particular question, but if I may just go back to the point that was made on MP turnover, when we were doing work for this research that we did for the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency, we interviewed quite a few parliamentarians and former parliamentarians. One of the things that has come out is how relatively ineffective the training of members of parliament can be, because—precisely—there is such a turnover rate that you train someone and then two years later they are not there anymore. One of the things that came up in conversation with several of the MPs we spoke with from the south was the idea of creating a hub of excellence in different countries that could pull in the expertise of former MPs who could then continue providing mentoring and support to incoming MPs. This is something that I just thought about because of what you mentioned, but it definitely seems to me that there are a lot of people out there who have been in parliament and have gone through a lot of training and now are lost to that and can share a lot of experience.

Q14 Fiona O'Donnell: Either Greg or Charles, do you think DFID should make it a condition of its contracting that you have to use those smaller organisations on the ground?

Charles Chauvel: It would be helpful if DFID built into its contracting better requirements for co-ordination. One of the big problems that we face on the ground as the biggest implementer of parliamentary strengthening programmes around the world is that you turn up and you find a number of players often doing very similar things. That in itself is

incredibly frustrating because of the waste of resources that it entails. Yes, it would be great to see DFID and other big donors being more imaginative in their contracting so that it required larger implementers to think about horses for courses where a smaller player might be a good party to work with, but I also think trying to build in some incentives for co-ordination would be an incredibly important outcome if you can do anything to try to achieve that.

Greg Power: I have just a very brief comment. We sound like we are giving the UNDP a hard time. The UNDP does some excellent work and, as Charles says, does get access where nobody else can get access, certainly in difficult political situations. The key, as Charles has alluded to, is greater variety in the sorts of projects that are commissioned. This is less to do with the UNDP than it is with the large private companies that are getting this work and then coming to us and saying, “We do not have the expertise. Can you help us?” If you have got a very large project—a parliament that needs 2,000 staff trained—you need a large organisation to be able to do that. If you are dealing with the politics—trying to get a committee system working, or supporting the office of the speaker or whoever it might be—the smaller, nimbler organisations can deal better with the politics of getting that reform through. If there is a large project coming into a parliament—we have seen this on several occasions—you build up political resistance to that reform, because it feels like the outside implementers are coming in to implement; there is no local control over this. It is not being driven by the politicians or the staff; it is being driven by the supply of this work from the organisation doing the implementation.

Q15 Fiona O'Donnell: Are those private companies being subcontracted by UNDP or is it DFID that is funding them directly?

Greg Power: No, that is the DFID procurement process itself.

Charles Chauvel: It is also the European Commission modality now. It is causing a real issue. If I could say one thing about the way to ensure quality, it is not to say, “Two legs good; four legs bad. Big implementers are bad necessarily and smaller private-sector companies are good.” You want quality players. The contracting process should assure that outcome above all else.

Alina Rocha Menocal: The key issue really is not the size of the implementer, because they all face the same constraints and incentives, but whether they are given enough space to do the kind of work that they need to be doing. This focus on longer term funding that gives them more visibility is quite important, I would say.

Q16 Fiona Bruce: I have some questions about Westminster expertise. Charles, you say “there is great unrealised value in the Westminster brand” and that its expertise could be better co-ordinated and used more. I wonder how this could be done better. Could I perhaps mention not only MPs but also we have a very large House of Lords now? Do we take advantage of that as we should?

Charles Chauvel: We have been working with a number of parliaments—the Westminster Parliament, the French National Assembly, the Bundestag and the Lok Sabha—to try to find appropriate peers to engage in some of the training that needs to be done and the knowledge exchanges that need to be worked on. As I said in my submission, it just seems to me that you have got this enormous pool of capacity here, as you say, in both

Houses but also in terms of the alumni MPs, who we always forget. There must be a way to tap into that level of expertise. Where there is in particular an Anglophone country that has Westminster traditions and where it is open to the knowledge exchange that is available, it seems to me there is enormous untapped potential to really work with you at Westminster to bring that expertise to bear, and it would be great to talk about how we could do that.

Q17 Fiona Bruce: Thank you. Perhaps that poses more questions. Greg, could I turn to you? Some submissions have stressed the limited number of people who can work on parliamentary strengthening from Westminster. For example, MPs and staff have their own jobs to do. I remember my office manager was asked by WFD to go to Pakistan, loved it, had a great time for several days and a few weeks later was asked to go to another country and went. I had to say, “Just a minute. I need you here.” What can we do to try to release the capacity that Charles has talked about but in a way that also ensures that our roles here are fulfilled?

Greg Power: It is partly about the way that this work is done. In each of the countries in which we work we have a team of what we call associates who work with us, who tend to be either sitting or former MPs or existing or former clerks, and the combination of skills works extremely well and they are complementary and you get the peer-to-peer engagement that Charles talked about.

The key is not assuming that you need to be working with a parliament overseas on a full-time basis; it is the commitment over a number of years and the willingness to go back. We have been working in Iraq since 2008. We have one member of the Lords, a former Member of Parliament, an existing Member of Parliament and a former parliamentary clerk. Our Iraqi friends have seen the same faces over six years, time and again. That builds up a relationship of trust. We are not taking the politicians and staff away from their existing jobs, because it is units of time we take from them, but they themselves build up an expertise on that particular country.

One other thing that I want to say quickly—I know we are running out of time—is that there is untapped value in the expertise that exists here in Westminster, but it is not necessarily innate to Westminster. It is not about how Westminster works. I often find myself starting a project by explaining what is wrong with Westminster and why you should not copy elements of the Westminster model. It is about the politics. It is about understanding how you get a reform process to work and about how politics works, about which there is an awful lot of expertise within Westminster that we could tap into.

Chair: I am conscious our other panel is here, but this is the last set of questions.

Q18 Jeremy Lefroy: Just very briefly, following the triennial review of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy—perhaps this is particularly aimed at Greg, but anybody please contribute—what are your hopes for the future of WFD and how it might improve its work?

Greg Power: As we have talked about, the Westminster brand is very powerful. WFD has now got a new chief executive, who is an excellent appointment. Again, I have a vested interest in this in that there is a tendency to just assume that parliamentary strengthening is just WFD. WFD can play a very important role but as part of a network of organisations

doing work with parliaments around the world. There is huge potential within WFD, but it is playing to its strengths that is the key for the next phase of the organisation itself.

Q19 Chair: Building on one suggestion that Hugh Bayley made, given the discussion we have had about the role of parliamentarians and former parliamentarians, do you think DFID should usefully have an advisory board of parliamentarians?

Peter Luff: Are we not that board?

Chair: Not that we have any interest to declare.

Charles Chauvel: It is a question of whether it is best for DFID to have that or whether that board might sit somewhere else. You could look to the experience of other jurisdictions here, where former and current MPs are used very effectively as resource people—sounding boards—by their foreign ministries. There is an active attempt to use the human capital that they represent to plug expertise gaps, and a body like that somewhere, whether it was advising DFID or whether it was a broader resource for the Westminster institutions, would be very useful.

Greg Power: It is a good idea. The key for DFID, though, in terms of improving how it does parliamentary strengthening, is to reflect on what it has done so far—what has worked and what has not. There does not seem to be an awful lot of reflection looking at the history of legislative strengthening commissioned by DFID, because it has been a small part. There are a number of lessons to be learnt that a board of MPs could contribute to very much.

Chair: Thank you very much. I am sorry it has been slightly compressed, but, as you see, we have got three panels. You will appreciate this Committee has a particular interest in what you are doing and how you do it. Thanks very much both for your written evidence and for coming here and giving us the oral evidence. Please feel free to stay for the next session if you wish to.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP**, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, **Andrew Tuggey**, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, and **Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP**, British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, gave evidence.

Q20 Chair: Good morning, gentlemen. Thank you very much for coming in. We know who you are very well, but I wonder for the record if you would introduce yourselves and the capacity in which you are here.

Alistair Burt: I am Alistair Burt, the Chair of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: I am Alan Haselhurst. I am the Chair of the UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and I have just completed a term of three years as the International Chairman of CPA.

Andrew Tuggey: I am Andrew Tuggey. I am the Chief Executive and Secretary of CPA UK.

Chair: Thank you very much. I should say that a number of us declare a non-commercial interest as members of the executive of either the IPU or the CPA or, in some cases, both.

Alistair Burt: Mr Chairman, if I may, I should also declare an interest, because I am an associate with Global Partners now and I was recently in Jordan with them on a project.

Q21 Chair: I appreciate that. We are doing this inquiry on parliamentary strengthening because as parliamentarians we feel quite strongly about it and we think it is justified. It was also triggered a little bit by our visit to Burma, where we felt there were things going on that were good in themselves but a bit ad hoc. I suppose the general question is: why do you think parliamentary strengthening is important, particularly in support of development? Although DFID say they take it very seriously, they do not spend an awful lot on it and make the point that maybe it is not very expensive. Are they doing it well? Are they doing it on the cheap?

Sir Alan Haselhurst: I fundamentally believe in the need to help with parliamentary strengthening, because good governance, with a population and even elected people believing that they have a process that is completely clear of corruption and working to the best standards and people can trust in the system, is crucial. If a parliament is able to demonstrate that, it gives confidence to those who wish to assist that country in other ways. If there is uncertainty over the stability and integrity of the democratic institutions, then perhaps investors shy away, thus defeating the needs of some of the countries for development of their industries, whether in manufacturing or in agriculture or wherever. So, yes, there is a need for it. There is no universal wisdom, in my opinion; we are all moving, being restless in what we have. This is true of this Parliament. Every new crop of Members of Parliament come in and history can show that you are facing new challenges—"Are we doing these things right?" and so on—but we are flattered in the United Kingdom by the fact that many countries look to us for at least assistance in tapping into the experience we have here, which they can then use as they think fit. We can assist that process.

You asked about DFID. I feel that there is not exactly a glass partition, but it comes across that Government is one thing and Parliament is another, and therefore a department of state such as DFID does not take advantage of the resource that Parliament has. From my experience, parliamentarians talking to other parliamentarians is often a better way of advancing causes, even though it may take time, than heads of government talking to heads of government, because they are much more in the spotlight. The role of parliamentarians is undervalued at the moment. I wish that DFID could be persuaded to be as generous perhaps as AusAID is to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and institutions that do a lot of good parliamentary strengthening work amongst the jurisdictions in the South Pacific.

Q22 Chair: Before you comment, Alistair, one of the things you might have picked up from the previous session, taking Sir Alan's point, is that effectively DFID is a bit uncomfortable with politics. Do you think that is part of the problem? But feel free to say what you like.

Alistair Burt: Yes, if I may answer that part of the question first. Government tends to be shy of party as much as politics. One of the things I have always found very useful but sometimes had to work very hard to persuade Government institutions of has been the need for party-to-party contact as part of the strengthening process. Government gets instinctively very anxious and defensive because it is so concerned with making sure that it is seen as non-party-political, and the very engagement or support of anyone who is working on a pure party-to-party basis causes worry. Part of the good work that is done through, say, the Westminster Foundation is to allow those party-to-party links, because we are all eminently capable of separating the purely party political from the technical expertise you need to create activists, to have links between activists and the centre, to do policy formation and to translate that into parliamentary or assembly work. Because like talks to like, there is an instinctive relationship between those who share common goals. Providing Government is involved in projects that support the technical and the non-political as well as this, Government is fulfilling its remit and not being actively engaged by being seen to support one side or another.

If I may just join Sir Alan's remarks for a second, the fundamental importance of parliamentary strengthening is that in most assemblies, if not all, even if parliament is not acting in concert with the executive because their parliamentary system ensures that executive and parliament are working in the same direction, almost invariably assemblies have a role in keeping a check on the executive and in supplementing and complementing its work. Parliamentarians are the lifeblood of this. It is not all done, as Sir Alan said, by departments and by government officials, and it is essential in many countries that parliamentarians, who have a direct link with the people, are able to ensure that what the people wish for is carried through in government. This may well lead to clashes with the executive. Unless parliaments have a sense of how they can work and build institutionally the ability to make decisions that will be respected and understood by the people because of the process in which they have come to their decisions, the chance of good governance is lessened. We need it now perhaps more than ever.

Just as an example, I have recently come back from a conference in Jordan with parliamentarians from Libya, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. I was further at another conference at the weekend in the Emirates, where we were looking at the issues today in the Middle East—the problems that the Arab Spring has revealed. The issue of governance goes to the heart of many of these particular problems. Although each country is different, the evidence of poor governance and the issues this creates in terms of discontent among the people are one of the root causes for the current unrest in those areas. I am even more strengthened in my belief that, although it is patient and although the results are not easy to find and you may indeed have to do things again and again because parliamentarians will change over time, it is essential to do this work to build up parliamentarians as well as doing the technical work of building up the institutions in which they work.

Q23 Chair: Andrew Tuggey, you organise conferences all the time and they are very well attended, so I guess that you have demonstrated that there is a market for this kind of exchange.

Andrew Tuggey: Yes, there is. I would completely concur with the comments by Mr Burt and Sir Alan. The importance of strengthening parliaments and the infrastructure of parliaments is that it will enable them to hold their executives better to account. It is not just the members that we need to concentrate on, although they are very important because, as Mr Burt said, in many parliaments there is 60% to 70% turnover of members at each election and often they are bullied by the executive because they do not necessarily have the ring-fenced funding; it is important to build up the infrastructure of the parliaments and the clerks and to gain the mutual respect that exists here.

This is one of the reasons we find that our programmes are so successful, because there is an infinite trust in this place. The pulling power of the portcullis, the keenness to come to Westminster and the respect in which Westminster is held throughout the world, not just in the Commonwealth, means that the programmes that we have are very popular and very well attended. We do have a huge demand for our work in building not just the conferences—there is one going on at the moment, and I think you are seeing them in a different inquiry tomorrow, Growth for Development, with parliaments from over the world, 50% from non-Commonwealth and 50% from Commonwealth—but also the expertise of clerks, the expertise of committees, the chairs of committees and how the speaker works. All these are things that are not necessarily the blueprint of Westminster but the way in which it is done.

Q24 Chris White: Good morning, gentlemen. Bearing in mind the previous discussion about whether or not DFID needs to take a more political approach, do you agree that parliamentary strengthening work is often too reactive and short term? How do you think in your roles that this attitude is changing? What is your role in changing this approach?

Sir Alan Haselhurst: It is sometimes the wearing away of water on stone. You have got to keep going on this.

Chris White: That is very slow, is it not?

Sir Alan Haselhurst: Yes it is. Bearing in mind what has already been said about the churn rate of Members of Parliament, inevitably in some cases you see quite wild political swings, so that suddenly a parliament has been three-quarters replaced as a result of the democratic vote of the people, so you are having to start again with some people.

What we should be doing is trying to find a more co-ordinated approach to determining the quality of certain programmes that have perhaps a universal value. Not only should DFID be involved in that but also, so far as the Commonwealth countries are concerned, the Commonwealth Secretariat, because they have some responsibilities for parliamentary strengthening. There are other organisations like UNDP that are also into this business of wanting to see parliaments strengthened. If we could have some understanding and, if you like, almost a kite-marking or certification of a programme—whether it is to strengthen the role of women parliamentarians, whether it is in the field of public accounts; whatever area one wishes to choose—in which everyone has confidence, that can be marketed, and then one looks at the individual component funding of such an approach.

Q25 Chris White: Thank you. Can I straight away come back to that? With regards to a kite mark or any other recognition or standard, is this something you have just thought up in this discussion now, or is this something you have been working on?

Sir Alan Haselhurst: I have brought it up in discussion now in the sense of using the term “kite mark”, but we have continually tried to gain recognition from friends and partners to say, “Look, we think what we are doing has got a value and we hope therefore if you believe in it that you will help support it so resources can go further”. Money resources are important in themselves, but the time of Members of Parliament and officials and clerks and so on is precious as well. We cannot be forever peripatetic. There is also a risk that this is seen as a highly marginal activity in the media and translated into being described as a “jolly”. People might go to a small Caribbean jurisdiction and inevitably, if a picture is taken, they will say, “What are they doing there?” and will not go into the details of it. Kite-marking, where something has the clear imprint of the major players, would help to assure people that this is serious business in which Parliament is rightly involved.

Q26 Chris White: Thank you. You make an interesting case. Alistair, sorry for interrupting.

Alistair Burt: No, Mr White; thank you. Could I just say that the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been working on this for some time? This year, at the most recent assembly in October, it passed its support for what are called common principles for support to parliament. These will be endorsed further at the next assembly in Hanoi next year. This is trying to find a series of norms around which we can all agree about how parliaments might be supported and strengthened. The principles that the IPU have come up with draw on more than 40 years of experience in the area of parliamentary development. Devised by a group of parliaments and parliamentary strengthening organisations and co-ordinated by the IPU, they will offer clear guidelines that will be of interest to anyone involved in receiving or providing support to parliaments. I would commend these and a copy, if it is not already with you, will certainly be made available.

I would add further that when we do the bilateral worker visits there is parliamentary strengthening almost invariably built into those. Exactly as Sir Alan says, when colleagues do go abroad or when colleagues come here—always the things raised in the press are when we go somewhere; very little attention is paid to those parliamentarians who come here—part of it is to work out the strategic priorities for the visit and to follow those through. It is those contacts that we believe also play a part in parliamentary strengthening and development. We then see some of the same colleagues at other gatherings. At the Geneva assembly this year I met parliamentary colleagues from Iraq and Afghanistan in particular who I had previously met in my previous role. In these cases, they are very brave individuals indeed, who are seeking a public life in a very difficult place, and they want extra skills to be able to do their jobs. The normal bilaterals we have are part of the strengthening process, but IPU in the United Kingdom—BGIPU—is subscribing to and supporting the common principles of support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which are now publicly available.

Q27 Jeremy Lefroy: Good morning. The triennial review of the Westminster Foundation found that there is no common strategy for strengthening democracy across Government departments in the UK or even, perhaps, a common place showing the pipeline of projects. It recommends developing such a strategy that would help to co-ordinate DFID and FCO priorities and perhaps help smaller Westminster bodies better plan for the future. Do you think this will be helpful, or is this pie in the sky?

Andrew Tuggey: It will be useful. We have worked closely with WFD in the past. We have tried to work, as have our colleagues elsewhere, with DFID, but it is quite difficult. As has been alluded to, there seems to be a difficulty within DFID amongst their officials to want to work with parliamentarians and organisations that work in Parliament to build and strengthen other parliaments. The triennial review, as far as WFD is concerned, with their new chief executive and taking on board the very important role that Mr Burt has mentioned already in the building of the capacity of political parties and then moving forward into the work of parliamentarians within parliament, which then goes off into the sector of strengthening the officials and the infrastructure of parliaments, is extremely important. If we could be involved from the outset when DFID and the FCO are formulating their strategies on governance—if we could be included in the conversation or be brought into the conversation at some stage—that would be very useful.

We think we might have an opening already, inasmuch as with our colleagues we already have a partnership with UNDP. We are going to be working with UNDP in certain countries. There is an opportunity for people who work at Westminster in both Houses—clerks, officials and members—to become involved in some of the programmes that they do, but we have to be involved from the outset and know what they are trying to achieve so we can contribute and offer advice and expertise when required.

Alistair Burt: We would agree with that. From my experience, it would be useful to consult earlier and raise the profile of this work and just get it on to the same part of the agenda as government-to-government support. Assembly-to-assembly or parliament-to-parliament support should have a significant degree of priority, because ultimately we are working with those who are taking decisions and some of those who will be taking major decisions in the future, and greater co-ordination can only assist that work.

Q28 Chair: A practical point occurs to me. You get money through the parliamentary budget. I am not saying they would do it, but if DFID said, “We see this as part of our parliamentary strengthening” and added to that budget, do the constitutions of both organisations enable you to take that money? I am not saying they would do it, but I would just be interested to know.

Andrew Tuggey: Certainly. We already leverage additional funding from elsewhere. If I may give you an example, the Foreign Office post in Colombo, which looks after the Maldives, asked us to bid for money from one of their funds to go and do some parliamentary strengthening work in the Maldives. £50,000 was the amount. We bid and we have been successful. We can leverage funding—we are allowed to do that—and it is an opportunity that we should take. There is sometimes a misconception that parliamentary strengthening is expensive. It is not quite as expensive as some of the other governance programmes. Certainly when using the human resource as exists in this place, all we are talking about generally speaking is airfares and accommodation. This is something that DFID finds difficult because of the way that it works. Because of the way

that it has to bid for its money and the way that its projects are initiated, it is quite difficult. We would find it quite difficult to take on a multi-million-pound project, but we would be very capable and find it very easy to fit into maybe existing projects, as long as we were in at the beginning and we could be part of the scoping and the planning process.

Alistair Burt: I am reliably informed by those who assist the BGIPU that it is within our remit to take in additional funds from elsewhere.

Q29 Jeremy Lefroy: In some of our committee visits we have seen the work that DFID supports on elections. In Congo two or three years ago we saw the enormous amount of money that was put into the preparation for and the monitoring of those elections. Do you think there is a disconnect between the enormous amount of money that international bodies, including DFID and those that DFID supports, put into the preparation for and monitoring of elections and then almost the abandonment of those who are elected afterwards?

Alistair Burt: That is a very good question. I do not know the answer to that. I suspect that is part of the work that you are doing. The BGIPU certainly, in its strategic programme that is agreed as a forward look, has particularly noted and is working deliberately with post-conflict and post-revolutionary areas in order to build. I am not aware that that might have been done in any form of conjunction. It makes common sense. If you work and spend public resources in supporting an electoral process in order to ensure that it is fair and transparent in order to give, therefore, legitimacy to the assembly when elected, it makes sense that people come along afterwards and work with it.

I genuinely would not know—you would have to see a spreadsheet of who was engaged and who was involved—to what extent there is a linkage. Certainly as far as BGIPU is concerned, we do recognise that where states have been through difficulties being able to support afterwards is a key part of it. The point you make is very good, and I would be very interested in seeing the results of an analysis of that sort.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: One of the tricky things is how you evaluate what it is you are doing. As I said earlier, these things are not necessarily producing an overnight result where you say, “Eureka! We have changed something definitely.” You have taken a step, hopefully, and the question is whether you have then got the attention to be able to take the next step that might be necessary to consolidate what you have done. That could depend on circumstances within the jurisdiction itself if there had been a change of government or a change of emphasis that spikes your guns, as it were, and what you hoped you were trying to do with them, but also because, however much it is right to co-ordinate, there is a certain amount of ad-hocery in all of this work at the moment. You might get a request out of the blue that was not necessarily on your master plan of your activities and you feel, “Yes, this is important. A situation has arisen in a particular jurisdiction. Our help is sought. We want to try to respond to it.” That possibly can take your eye off what you were doing elsewhere or you are running short of resources. This is a common factor in life, is it not? You have got so many things that you want to do that you have to prioritise, and you may shift your attention from one to another.

We can reduce the difficulty of that if we are looking to one side and the other as to just exactly who is doing what. I would not want that accompanied by excessive bureaucracy, but I remember occasions when I have been within a country where the high

commissioner or the ambassador has said, “Well, of course, some of you lot are in town as well”. “Oh, really? And we did not know that and there was no co-ordination beforehand? Do we each know the other’s programme?” It may not be obvious if there is supposedly a focus on a totally different matter, but by the very fact that they are there they ought to be aware of what other work is being done by the British Parliament or parliamentarians at that time.

Q30 Pauline Latham: You have touched slightly on some of the issues. DFID are looking to move towards payment by results. This is clearly quite a difficult thing to do, so, both IPU and CPA, could you briefly tell us what your main achievements in parliamentary strengthening have been? Do you think DFID realises the importance of politicians working together? Do donors have realistic expectations about what parliamentary strengthening programmes can achieve? Do their processes allow for it?

Andrew Tuggey: I might take some case studies that we have probably brought forward in our written evidence and enlarge upon them. I take the case of Sierra Leone. If we can leave aside for a moment the awful Ebola crisis, I believe that this country has a moral responsibility to help Sierra Leone. We have been very successful in training a cohort of clerks with our colleagues from DCCS and elsewhere and bringing them forward. We have also been successful in raising the esteem in which those clerks are held by their members. This has translated into higher pay. We have also started concentrating on the members themselves and the success of committees.

Moving outside Sierra Leone but also within the process of that region, the issue of women’s programmes—programmes for building the capacity of elected women parliamentarians—has been hugely successful. I do not think DFID has the slightest idea about it. I do not think they have focussed on it; I do not think they understand the necessity perhaps.

Flicking back to Sierra Leone, I remember we had a cup of coffee with two DFID consultants on Sierra Leone, and they said, “We think probably the best way to deal with some of the governance issues in Sierra Leone is to concentrate at local level and on NGOs. Parliamentarians in Sierra Leone hardly ever visit their constituencies.” This was quoted in evidence that was given to you. It is completely incorrect.

Chair: Even if it was true, maybe that is an argument for trying to have a dialogue to change it.

Andrew Tuggey: Absolutely. 90% of the MPs do. I am sure they are very good consultants, but had they used parliamentarians and had they used perhaps the people who work in parliament, they would have got a better result.

Moving on to the women’s programmes in particular, we had huge success with our programmes in Pakistan. The Pakistani Women’s Parliamentary Caucus was very keen to become engaged with us. Women parliamentarians from here—some of you here—have been involved in that. They brought in the Afghans. The Afghan women parliamentarians, one of whom was almost blown up last week, have been involved. That has now evolved into Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives and, had the Indian budget not been going through, we would have brought in the Indian women parliamentarians. That is the whole of South Asia represented. That is a huge result in terms of

parliamentary diplomacy—bringing those women together to talk about other issues, because there is networking involved, and the success of highlighting some of the challenges that women parliamentarians and women in those countries face.

Alistair Burt: I would be, again, happy to run through two or three. The examples I have taken are from the capacity-building work BGIPU has particularly been involved in in the last couple of years in Somalia, Sudan and Haiti—two inward and one external.

We were involved in a capacity-building programme with members of the Somali House of the People. This was a group of parliamentarians who came over in July this year to strengthen the Somali parliamentary institution. They had a range of meetings. The delegation was given a detailed overview of the Westminster system from both House of Commons and House of Lords clerks. They had an opportunity to learn about the work of the House of Commons Commission and Office of the Chief Executive as well as discussing library and information services. That is an incidental to us, but in places where information can be rigidly controlled, people have got to have access, and the way in which this institution is able to get access to the information that it needs—objective information—is really important. The delegation also gained first-hand insights and practical advice from the Clerk of the House, Sir Robert Rogers, who discussed with delegates how they might prioritise the needs and services of the House of the People to best aid parliamentarians in establishing new laws and a new parliamentary structure.

We had an all-women parliamentary delegation from Sudan earlier this year in order not only to emphasise their work but also to see how best they could do that. They had particular workshops, peer-to-peer mentoring, and detailed exchanges on the work of women in this Parliament and how that experience could be shared.

Then a group visited Haiti as part of our continuing relationship there. That had to deal with the things that were going well as well as the things that were not going well: political entrenchment; corruption; clientelism; abuse of power; and self-interests.

When delegations go, they find people prepared to be forthcoming about the challenges they face. They get advice and support from us on dealing with these, both technically and from parliamentarians, and we publish all this. We have strategic objectives for visits or delegations coming in and we publish information about how the visit has gone compared to those objectives to see that they have been met. There is detailed work done on this and, as people have said earlier, it all builds.

I have used this example in talking to parliamentarians around the world. We have been here for 1,000 years. In the last few years we have had a referendum on the shape of our country; we have had a referendum on our voting system; and at the beginning of this Parliament we re-organised the election of senior members of the House on our major committees. After 1,000 years we keep making changes. We are dealing with developing institutions as well. What you cannot do is say, when people have reached 99% of a Westminster model, “Tick; they are there”. It will not ever be like that. If there is at least consent between the governed and the governors, transparency about how they go about the work and accountability—all the things that we take for granted as a way of seeking to convince our population, though not always successfully, of the way in which we work here—then we are making serious progress in places where the absence of that has led to genuine strife and loss of life.

Q31 Pauline Latham: DFID want to move towards this new model. How best do you think they can do it?

Alistair Burt: DFID needs to acknowledge the work that parliamentarians have done. We were slightly surprised in the evidence submitted by DFID that a couple of the things that we had done directly with them were not attributed to BGIPU but were more attributed to the partners we had worked with. Again, it is breaking down that sense of, “Well, if you are working with MPs, they may have party interests and they may have self-interests. You have always got to watch these politicians; you never know what they are after.” It is breaking down that sense and seeing us in modern parliaments as a resource. We are a resource. Who knows better how to do this work than we do? We have got to be challenged and accountable for what we do domestically, and we take that with us if we are working abroad. Many of these places are not in exclusive relationships; they take advice from others—other parliaments, other institutions and the like—and that helps to build up a picture of what they are like. I see us being available to the Government here and governments elsewhere as a resource for the work they need to do, sometimes in quite touchy and difficult places.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: If I may, at the risk of repeating myself, if you can get that common understanding across the major partners as to the worth of a particular type of programme that can be identified, that should give confidence that parliamentarians and their officials and the clerks are doing a serious piece of work. That also needs to be marketed, in the sense that we should not say, “Leave it to IPU” or “Leave it to CPA” but our ambassadors and high commissioners should, as it were, be possessed of the knowledge that, if in the country where they are representing us there is a need for a particular type of assistance in strengthening the parliament, they can know what to recommend, not just keep their distance from us and wait for us to pop up.

Andrew Tuggey: DFID officials could be encouraged to think a little bit more outside the box. We may be almost there. We have had discussions recently with Stefan Kossoff, their head of governance, and we might be moving along the same route that we are in the process of moving with UNDP, who work on behalf of DFID, and I hope that we may be able to become involved. There are the issues of M and E and the awful DFID logframes, and they can deal with those—we do not particularly want to become involved with those—but there is a need to have a sensible, practical monitoring and evaluation system. We can probably work with WFD, which we have already started, and we have already contacted DFID to try to bring us together so that we can have a common template on M and E. It is quite difficult doing M and E in parliamentary strengthening work because of the transient nature of some of the members, but it is not impossible and it need not be quite as complicated. So, yes, there are opportunities.

Q32 Fiona O'Donnell: Good morning, gentlemen. Andrew, I was interested to hear about the contract—congratulations—that you have won in the Maldives. You made the point about the really large-scale contracts that DFID awards in this field, and we have had criticisms that those just automatically go to UNDP and that organisations like all of yours are not able to engage in that process. What changes practically can DFID make that would draw on more strands? How do you think they can improve the monitoring as well of UNDP work? Do any of you have any comments?

Andrew Tuggey: As I have just mentioned, it is difficult for DFID officials because of this slight fear that my two parliamentary colleagues have mentioned. There seems to be a slight fear of getting involved with parliamentarians because of the politics of it. The Foreign Office does not have this problem. We can contribute to their work but we do not necessarily want to be the major deliverer of a huge project. We would find that very difficult because of the administration required, but we would be very happy to be involved as part of the delivery, as we are hoping to do with UNDP. We have already been speaking with the State University of New York, which is one of the major deliverers of Kenya's parliamentary strengthening process, which is funded by USAID and DFID, and they seem to be very happy to use us as one of their resources. If we can work in that way, that makes it easy for us to be able to contribute what we can do and also it means that we are not impinging on the huge effort that DFID has to put in in a great big multi-million-pound programme.

Fiona O'Donnell: Alistair, do you want to add anything?

Alistair Burt: I simply come back to something I said earlier about acknowledging the role that the BGIPU plays over a lengthy period of time in its bilateral work, which is based on certain parameters that would fit very neatly with what DFID is looking to do. For instance, when we are looking at future visits, one of our key objectives is that we engage with counterparts in countries facing political transition and democratic-reform challenges, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. A second is to bolster bilateral links with counterparts in and outside the EU, including with the newly emerging democracies and post-conflict countries significant to Europe's peace and prosperity, including in neighbouring regions. Our regular work is based on strategic imperatives that may well benefit from further consultation or at least input from DFID as to how we proceed. They would also, I am sure—if they are not already aware—find the way in which we look at our forward look and devise where we are bringing people in from and going to complementary to what they do. It is just greater communication.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: The proper role of CPA International should be—I do not think it has satisfactorily attained it—as the disseminator of good practice in this respect, so that when they know of something that has got proven value they are marketing it, if you like, within the region. We have got to recognise that whatever we seek to do here, and we do a great deal, there are other Commonwealth countries that are working very hard within their own regions to help the smaller jurisdictions and others who may seek their help, where it can be done—in other words, a programme can be reproduced—at less cost in both time and money. I would like to see the role of the CPA internationally, rather than trying to reinvent everything itself, very much as taking the best practice and spreading it around and making sure that the strengthening work is going on.

Q33 Fiona O'Donnell: Andrew, you can add this on to what you were going to say. I was concerned by Greg Power's evidence, when he said that some private companies are winning contracts that clearly they do not have the skills, experience or relationships to deliver. Do you have any experience of them then coming to you?

Andrew Tuggey: Yes. We visited the European Parliament recently and I have spoken briefly with François Duluc from the Assemblée Nationale. Brussels is full of private companies touting for work. It is quite interesting. We were invited to bid for money

from a consortium—an organisation based out of Vienna—which we politely declined, and we passed them on to a retired colleague to see if he might be interested. They are making money hand over fist. They are not doing it for charitable work. Greg is quite right. It is effectively taxpayers' money, whether it be from this country or elsewhere in the European Union or in the Commonwealth.

This is a trick that perhaps DFID need to look at if they involve these people. This was an EU project in Pakistan. It is a great disappointment, because parliaments would prefer parliamentarians to do parliamentary strengthening work. Talking about this Parliament—and I am sure the Assemblée Nationale is the same—we are trusted. We are flexible. We can work very quickly, as Sir Alan indicated. We often get last-minute requests. Last week we suddenly had a Tanzanian committee wanting to come at the last minute, and we can do it. We are trusted. Private companies are not necessarily trusted and so therefore do not get the access and do not get the buy-in. DFID should look back to its ODI-commissioned report in November 2008, which said: “Please use more parliamentarians and people who work in Parliament to do your governance and parliamentary strengthening work”.

Alistair Burt: Can I just add this, if I may? This is something that I know is very hard for commentators and critics of Westminster to accept or understand, but the way in which we are seen in so many different jurisdictions is really quite striking. In my previous role in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I noticed that from the respect in which our diplomats are held, our Ministers are held and our Parliament is held. It is true that we are often a first call when people have a problem and a worry and they see the way in which we do this.

I am not saying this because of individual credit to current parliamentarians or anything else, but the fact that we follow in this extraordinary tradition, which has been honed over so many years through all sorts of different issues that we have been through, and the quality of the parliamentary staff who work here, the sheer abilities that they have at devising solutions to problems and the selfless way in which they go about their work. Westminster is an extraordinary brand in the modern sense, and although we labour under the weight of criticism for all sorts of things we do—and some of it is justified; we all know that—the way in which we are seen abroad is very striking. We do have something that we are able to contribute to others and we should value the opportunities that that gives us to help not provide a blueprint model to anybody else but to take the values and principles on which this place has worked and with which it still works when we reform the things that we have got wrong. They provide an example of openness and transparency and sometimes self-criticism that can be very important in the places where we are working, where those issues are very hard for them to deal with.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: If I could just add to that—I absolutely agree with what Alistair has said—the fact is that if we are effectively contributing to the strengthening of parliamentary institutions, which in turn impact on government institutions in certain countries, that is all to the good so far as ticking off another country where it is less likely that their parliament will be overturned because there is dissatisfaction with it and that it may be then calling upon other reserves from our country to assist in a bad situation that has developed. By accretion of good standards and the confidence within countries in their institutions, there is also a benefit to us and the rest of the world.

Andrew Tuggey: I have alluded to the pulling power of the portcullis. The soft power of Westminster, as both parliamentary colleagues have mentioned, is immense, but I do not think it is understood. The Foreign Office probably understands it; I am not sure that DFID does, because we do not have the same easy working relationship with DFID officials at the moment as we do with Foreign Office officials. The soft power that this place emits is immense and we should use that.

Q34 Fiona Bruce: What is coming across again and again this morning is that Westminster has a great deal to offer in terms of expertise and in terms of parliamentarians' capacity, but in what ways do you need your capacity strengthened to release this potential that clearly exists?

Alistair Burt: If I could answer that first, internationally the adoption of the common principles of parliamentary strengthening, which was a key feature of this year's assemblies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at international level, has brought the concept of parliamentary strengthening much more centre stage in terms of an offer to parliaments that are developing and struggling and looking for assistance or, indeed, just looking for new ways of working. The way in which BGIPU has contributed to that and continues to do so will help project this. Our own determination to look at impact measurement, which we are working on at the moment, to make sure that we fully evaluate what it is that we are doing and how effective it is, again will add to that.

It is a resource. It is used, because we have the bilateral visits as well as the particular capacity-building work that we are asked to do, but we need to be very forward in being out there, proud of what we do and willing to take on opportunities when they come up. There is increased international focus on this now. As I say, I have been very struck in dealing with some states in the last few months that have recognised that the failure of governance within those states and within neighbouring states has made a major contribution to the conflicts that are raging in the region at present. Therefore, whatever political issues need to be settled in states and their conflicts, building the institutions that will make it less likely that there is conflict in the future is much higher on their agenda than it used to be.

Q35 Fiona Bruce: Can I just come back briefly on that? You talked about good governance instilling confidence in people. Others on the panel have talked about the challenges of churning regarding parliamentarians and their education. Should we be looking more at strengthening regional or even local government in some of these countries? I think about the Speaker's delegation to Burma that I went on. Clearly the national government needed strengthening, but the regional government needed very much more. Are we addressing this sufficiently?

Alistair Burt: Maybe we are not the people to speak to about that. Speak to the Local Government Association. The concept is right—regional administration in many countries is almost as important as anything national; that is absolutely correct—but maybe we are not the people to do that. Relationships between the centre and regions will clearly always be an important part of the work in a unified structure such as the United Kingdom, and there are areas of expertise that we can comment upon, but there will be others in regional and local government who will have their own perspective on that.

In relation to the churn, I would simply just put down a marker to say I do not think time with any parliamentarians is ever wasted. Yes, parliamentarians will come and go from their assemblies, but that should not be used as a reason to say, “Well, because they are not going to be here all the time, let us talk to other people”. We should build up a degree of expertise and, if I may say so, also give people the sense that if they are in power and in office they are not always going to be, and it is a rather healthy thing that they leave institutions and then seek to come back. We all deal with people in places where power is rigidly held on to because people do not share power, and giving people the confidence that if they leave an institution they are part of a political grouping that may well come back to office is all part of the process. I would still say that in spending time with parliamentarians, even if they are only going to serve one term—nobody knows when you are dealing with them—you are building up something that could be of real value in them understanding the cycle of politics if they are working in a place where perhaps that has not been part of their structure in the past.

Q36 Fiona Bruce: Can I just ask this more widely of the panel? Please address those questions, but also what you see as the role of a reformed WFD and how you see yourselves working with it.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: Many of the things we are discussing today are not talked about on a regular basis by the electorate. It is hard to imagine that these sorts of issues are exchanged in the queue at the checkout and so on. Alas, that is the reality of the situation. But at least we in Parliament ought to be aware of what we are doing and take pride in it, and that can also reflect, I would hope, in the grant in aid that our organisations have to continue this work. I do not want to exaggerate the need for all of this, but however professional I regard IPU and CPA here in the United Kingdom, the fact is we can always enhance our reach if there is more resource available, and Parliament should not feel it should be looking over its shoulder at Government because what they are doing by making these grants is somehow irresponsible. Government have got to understand what the role of Parliament is. We have got to make sure that the Government recognises this across the board so that there is support for us. We should regularly find opportunities to debate these issues and take pride in what we do.

One thing I have been very frustrated about in my time as International Chairman of the CPA is that the Heads of Government Meeting has spawned all sorts of other organisations in the Commonwealth family meeting together, but the people who have had the least bite of the cherry have been parliamentarians. It is only in the last three years that there has even been a representation of Commonwealth parliamentarians at the CHOGM. What more natural link is there in the Commonwealth family than between the heads of government and parliamentarians? One should have a systematic basis on which, after these great declarations that are made at the end of CHOGM, questions are then asked in respective parliaments about, “By the way, how are we doing in our country in implementing this?” and so on so there is a clear link in the work we are doing. That leads to then asking ourselves the question, “What is the follow-up that we should be doing? Where are our priorities in terms of our outreach from our respective organisations?”

Chair: We are running out of time, but Andrew, briefly, do you want to comment on the WFD?

Andrew Tuggey: Yes, quickly, about building capacity within Parliament here first. There is an opportunity, certainly as far as the officials are concerned. They are a finite resource. We are continually reminded that the officials here exist in the main to run this place. There is an opportunity for the officials perhaps to take on and have within their remit the requirement to help on international development and parliamentary strengthening. That might mean perhaps an increase in their establishment—I do not know. We need to make more use of the House of Lords as well.

As far as local and regional government is concerned, this morning we had an invitation from the Commonwealth Local Government Forum to go and speak at one of their events in January. They are the people who are expert in this. One of the reasons that some of your colleagues abroad have constituency development funds is because local government is not strong enough. One of the reasons that they are expected at the weekends, certainly in Africa, to go and dole out largesse for weddings and funerals is because the local community does not understand that is not what MPs are meant to do.

WFD is funded by DFID and the FCO. One of their remits, as I mentioned earlier, is to work with political parties, which is extremely important. There is a role for us to work together. We have already worked together in something called The Westminster Consortium, bringing together partners from outside. That was partially successful, but the principle was very good. There is definitely an opportunity for us to work more closely with WFD, especially under their new chief executive, to take forward some of the initiatives that both of us feel are necessary in terms of monitoring and evaluation and parliamentary strengthening.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: Chairman, may I just add one further word, please? We have been rightly talking about parliamentary strengthening and how we can be better at it and how we can be recognised for what we are doing. Let us not underplay parliamentary diplomacy as the side of this. When parliamentarians meet together they discover some of the things they have in common, which helps to strengthen their determination to tackle a particular problem in their jurisdiction in a way they had not perhaps thought of before. The matters on which they differ can perhaps be more easily dealt with in conversation between them and understanding reached over a period of time, and that is also very helpful if one is trying to build alliances across the world. Sometimes it might be dismissed as the lesser part of the relationships that we have in order essentially to try to promote good governance, but it is a part of it that should not be forgotten.

Chair: Thank you very much. Alistair, you made the point about political parties working party to party, which is something the Westminster Foundation was almost set up to do, but a lot of us have experience that politicians can work regardless of party on the institution of parliament, so there is a role for both. The Westminster Foundation is in one box; it has not really got into the other box, and if the review changes that, that might be helpful. I hope you will find this inquiry helpful to what you do and we very much appreciate that you have taken the time and trouble to engage with us. We have rather a lot of evidence sessions—we have another one after this—but we very strongly believe that we are working with post-conflict and fragile states. A Minister said to us, “Working with parliamentarians is too difficult. They do not stay there for very long”—all the things we have said—whereas you have all said, “That is precisely the problem. We have to take a

long-term view as to how we work with parliamentarians to change the situation, which does not happen overnight.” The organisations you represent clearly have a contribution to make to keep live links between parliaments and parliamentarians, which are extremely valuable. Thank you very much indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Crispin Poyser**, Overseas Office, House of Commons, and **François Duluc**, Assemblée Nationale, gave evidence.

Q37 Chair: Thank you very much. I apologise, François, for your name plate. It is Duluc, not Dulac.

François Duluc: No problem.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming in. For the record, again, as you have seen, I would be grateful if you could introduce yourselves.

François Duluc: My name is François Duluc. I was, until last week, the head of the inter-parliamentary co-operation department of the French National Assembly for six years. Before that, for two years I was a parliamentary development adviser of UNDP in the United Nations headquarters, before Charles’ predecessor.

Crispin Poyser: I am Crispin Poyser, Clerk of the Overseas Office in the House of Commons for the last three years.

Q38 Chair: Thank you both very much indeed. I know you have been in for some of the previous evidence so you have heard our discussions, but both the House of Commons and the Assemblée Nationale have been doing parliamentary strengthening in different ways for a long time. What do you think you can draw from that in terms of what worked best, the lessons learnt, and what impact or effect your work has had? One of the difficulties we have is there is a tendency to say, “How many meetings have you had?” but what changes have been made or what outcomes can you identify from this kind of strengthening work?

François Duluc: First of all, I would like to say that we have a long experience in parliamentary strengthening and that we have a particular position in France. The French National Assembly is the only player on the field. It is not the same as in the UK or in Germany, for example. We do not have such things as foundations, linked or not linked to political parties. We do not have the French equivalent of DFID, because the AFD do not have a mandate in governance, and there is very little funding from the French foreign affairs ministry and from the embassies. The French national parliament is the only player on the field in terms of parliamentary strengthening, which is very important for us.

We have learnt that sometimes it is a bit frustrating and that you need to be very optimistic when you do this job, because you need to invest in the future. You can expect two kinds of results. First, it is to promote democracy and good governance in developing countries

and in countries recovering from major crises; and, after that, you have to make democracy deliver. It is a huge task and sometimes it is very frustrating, because we may have the feeling sometimes that we achieved something, but what is positive one day may not be the following day. I will give you an example. In Burkina Faso, we invested a lot of effort and a lot of expertise in the last few years and we really created something positive in the Burkina Faso parliament, but there was a coup d'état one month ago and the parliament was dissolved. It is very frustrating.

Chair: You might say it is too early to say whether or not all your work has been lost, because the President was trying to outstay his welcome.

François Duluc: Yes, of course. As I say, it is an investment for the future, so maybe the politicians or the senior staff we have supported during the last few years will be still in office next year after the next general elections. Sometimes you need to be very strong because you may have the feeling that you are trying to grow vegetables in the desert, which is not the case.

The second point I would like to mention, because nobody mentioned it before, is that for us it is also an investment for French influence in the world and for French diplomacy. We have to be honest about this. With parliamentary strengthening, we invest in the future. With junior politicians, for example, in the parliament we create a network and maybe a few years after these politicians were in Paris for training or a workshop for one week, two weeks or four weeks they will be foreign affairs ministers of their countries or even prime ministers or presidents. We have had a few examples. There is a general interest and I strongly believe in it, but there is also a national interest in parliamentary strengthening that we should not forget.

You asked about the lessons learnt. One lesson learnt is that it is very important to work with both the staff and the parliamentarians, because there is a turnover of parliamentarians in developing countries, especially in Africa. They change all the time. It is important to invest in the staff—in the permanence of the institutions. What is important also is to understand that it is not an issue of money. A lot of public or private organisations want to do some parliamentary strengthening work because there is a lot of money to earn, especially with the European Union programmes. What is important for us is not to earn money with this. It is not our problem. We refuse to get fees and we refuse to be paid for this. What we want is really to help our counterparts in foreign countries, but it is sometimes difficult to have that attitude because it is not shared by everybody everywhere else. This is what I can say to answer your questions.

Crispin Poyser: You asked, Chair, about impact and about what works. On impact, if I went on at length I would be repeating a lot of what has already been said this morning, so I will try not to do that. I would only emphasise that while it is difficult to say why it is so important to help parliaments, it is pretty obvious that if you have a weak parliament you are not going to have a very effective democratic country. If I look at it from that end, it almost answers the question.

As for what impact our work has, the Overseas Office and the House of Commons administration itself is nearly always just contributing as part of somebody else's project, so we are very rarely going to be able to say that we have delivered this or that particular democratic outcome. Also, as everybody else has said this morning, the timescale for

measuring is just so difficult that it is very difficult to point to precise outcomes. In terms of some examples, I would point to the way in which our work has been appreciated in certain recent cases.

Kenya had a major constitutional reform a couple of years ago, with the setting up of two houses and a re-organisation of their parliamentary staff to serve two houses differently from how they had worked before. We have had a constant programme of parliamentary staff from both houses coming to Westminster looking for advice and experience from us. They would not keep coming back if they did not think it was useful.

Morocco is another example. We got involved largely through The Westminster Consortium, which you have heard about in other contexts, working largely with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. There, too, we have been asked for help in various different areas, even though it is naturally a French sphere of influence, you might say, rather than a British one.

In Sierra Leone we worked with the CPA UK programme that Andrew Tuggey spoke about before, and we have contributed at staff level to the training of their committee staff. That has been a reasonably clear output. Measuring the longer term effectiveness is much more difficult.

In Burma, which a number of you know about, the work we have been doing has been quite unusual for us. It was kick-started by the visit of the Speaker and some of you with the Speaker's delegation only last year, in August 2013, since when we have had quite a lot of work with outgoing people and a library clerk embedded there. So far as we can assess, that work has been proving quite effective already.

François Duluc: I would like to add something, if you will allow me. Especially from our point of view, we have to avoid a neo-colonial approach to parliamentary strengthening. We are a former colonial empire, as is the UK, and we have to understand that our goal in parliamentary strengthening is not to impose the French parliamentary system because it is not possible to export this system elsewhere, for a lot of reasons—mostly financial reasons but also cultural and historical reasons. We have to give other parliaments the tools—the technical tools and the legal tools—to find their own way to democracy. That is our point of view, but it is not always the case. For example, our American friends from USAID or NDI tend to prepare ready-made bills for national parliaments. That is not at all our approach. We have a very modest approach, I must say. We consider that we have 225 years of experience of parliamentary democracy. We are young in that respect compared with the UK, but it is still work in progress. In 2008 we changed half of the articles of our constitution and all our rules of procedure in order to strengthen our own oversight and monitoring activities. We are not in the position to say that we are perfect and that the others have to copy us.

Crispin Poyser: I would agree with all of that, but you asked also about lessons. Again, if I went down that route I would be repeating a lot of the messages you have already had this morning, but if there was one single lesson that I would promote above all the others it is that work done in an overseas parliament has to be in some sense owned by that parliament and driven by it, not by the donor.

Q39 Hugh Bayley: If I was a DFID official reading the transcript of this morning's discussions I would say, "Well, there is a catch-22. These people complain continuously that we, DFID, do not use parliamentarians and parliamentary staff enough in our parliamentary capacity building work, yet at the same time they talk about constraints on the resources they have to devote." My question first to Crispin is this. What could the Clerk's department and other departments, like the library of the House of Commons, do to make the resource you have at the moment go further in terms of providing assistance to parliaments abroad? Secondly, how feasible would it be for the Clerk's department, for example, to significantly increase its resource in response to contracts from DFID or elsewhere? Could you take on a cadre of a dozen clerks who would work on international affairs?

Chair: Can I supplement Hugh's question with a specific to Burma, which you were going to ask anyway? In Burma you have sent a full-time official for quite a long secondment, and another official is on regular visits. How many times could you do that and not be accused of being overstaffed?

Crispin Poyser: You pose some tricky questions there. First of all, just as a premise, it is a given that this kind of work is most effective if done by, or led by, MPs on the one side and officials on the other of working parliaments. What do we already try to do to maximise what can deliver with the people we already have? We make such use as we can of recently retired people—for example, Alistair Doherty, who is well known to the Committee as your previous Clerk.

Chair: Indeed. The former Clerk to this Committee.

Crispin Poyser: He has been helping through various intermediary organisations in a vast range of countries. Secondly, what I try to do is to get in with the intermediary bodies—whether it is CPA UK or Westminster Foundation or Global Partners or anyone else—at the planning stage so that I can identify perhaps a colleague House official who might be able to take the lead on our side of that work. If they can get in at the planning stage, it maximises the chances of the further events that are going to be created fitting in with a timetable we can deliver on. Having said that, House finances are currently very tight, so I cannot see the House of Commons Commission and Management Board at the moment overtly increasing the budget to provide a whole load of extra staff who would expand our capacity to do this.

You asked a slight variant, which was whether we could expand the headcount funded by other people. I have to say conceptually that is possible, but it would take a House of Commons Commission decision of principle to enable that to happen. Just to give one little example, in the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's triennial review, which we may get to later, the Clerk of the House was asked how we could help with that. One of the things we identified that we would look at was if we could perhaps second somebody to WFD, who would have to be paid for by WFD, but even that would require increasing the staff headcount by one to enable that to happen. Just as a last rider to that, we can increase, in principle, the House headcount if other people are paying, but the right people do not thereby become available overnight. They have got to be experienced people if they are going to add any value to the country you are working with.

Q40 Hugh Bayley: Mr Duluc, what capacity constraints does the Assemblée Nationale have, what resources does the Assemblée put into this, and how do you manage the capacity that you have? If you have conflicting demands, how do you prioritise?

François Duluc: These resources were launched 20 years ago by a former speaker of the French National Assembly called Philippe Séguin. He was himself born in Tunisia and the fact that he had previous experience of Africa and the Arab states may be an explanation of his interest in parliamentary strengthening in Africa especially. I have a team of five people working on a permanent basis with me on parliamentary strengthening programmes, and we can use all the network of the clerks of the French National Assembly and the parliamentarians, although it is very difficult for parliamentarians because, first, they are very busy—in France you can be a mayor as well as a parliamentarian at the same time—so sometimes it is quite difficult to have them on the ground for parliamentary development activities. The second issue is that most multilateral activities are implemented in English and very few French politicians and civil servants speak English and are able to work in English. It is a huge problem for us.

Apart from that, we manage to find experts, because our staff has a long experience—I have been myself for 30 years in the French National Assembly—and we have rules of internal mobility. That means that we have experience of all the departments, so it is always possible to find somebody to send as an expert somewhere in a national parliament on a regular basis. For example, in 2013 we had technical assistance to 80 parliaments in the world. That means around 130 seminars or workshops of one week, two weeks or four weeks in Paris in the National Assembly. It means 75 to 80 missions of experts sent to national parliaments abroad. It is quite active. It is quite important. I think UNDP considers that we are the most active national parliament in the area of parliamentary strengthening in the world.

Q41 Fabian Hamilton: Crispin, do you think DFID could fund, or should fund, parliamentary strengthening work in a different way to allow smaller groups to take on small, flexible interventions?

Crispin Poyser: I have read that submission in a lot of the other papers from the other British organisations involved, and I am sure the answer is yes. I am slightly hesitant because it is not usually the House of Commons administration that would directly be bidding to DFID, but we have seen round the fringes of the work we do that the flexibility to add in a little extra funding here or there can help make that that bit more effective. An example, again, is Burma, where we have been able to second a person on the ground to Burma, which has been terribly effective, but every now and then a little extra requirement is involved and it has been very helpful that the FCO—it is FCO rather than DFID, but it might be a joint effort in Burma—have been able to supplement that, for example by funding his local interpreter, who acts also as a local cultural fixer, if that is not an inappropriate term, to work with him. That can be the difference between making the project useful and making it really useful.

Q42 Fabian Hamilton: Do you see a role—if so, what role—for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy?

Crispin Poyser: I am sure there is a role. Most of the Westminster Foundation's activity is in the party-political sphere rather than what you might call the more technical, pure

capacity-building field, and I see less of that and that is fine, but the Westminster Foundation is part of the UK offer as viewed from overseas and therefore it is right for all of us to be working with it—when I say “all of us” I mean the House of Commons administration and the House of Lords administration—and we are very happy to do so. I think I am right in saying the decisions on the triennial review have not yet been taken—at least if they have I have not seen them—and we are waiting to see how that goes, but we contributed to the review as to how we might be able to work better with it.

Q43 Fabian Hamilton: Thank you for that, Crispin. François, with the Assemblée, does the French international development and aid organisation, which we met with in Paris earlier this year, get involved with parliamentary strengthening at all?

François Duluc: What organisation?

Fabian Hamilton: The overseas development branch of the Quai d’Orsay.

François Duluc: No. They sometimes give us some money in order to support our efforts. They have some funding, but it is smaller and smaller. We face a huge budget crisis, as you know, in France these days, so it is very difficult to find support from the foreign affairs ministry. We have good relations on the ground with the embassies but it is not financial; it is more logistical and political. What we try to do in France because we have this budget crisis is to work as often as possible with EU funding and with UNDP, which is a major partner. EU funding is important, because you have a lot of funds with parliamentary twinning or technical assistance projects funded by the European Union. By the way, France funds 19% of these projects, as of all the European budget, so we try to work with the European Union as often as possible.

It is not very easy, because there is a lot of paperwork in all these European bids. It is very time consuming and you need to focus on these bids, but we are quite successful. I have been myself project leader of numerous European Union funded projects, whether twinning or technical assistance projects, and we have won all the bids in the last years apart from Serbia, where the Greek parliament won the bid, but that was for political and diplomatic reasons, we may understand. It is time consuming, but it is European money, so we have a duty to be part of these projects.

Q44 Fabian Hamilton: Forgive my ignorance, but is there a French equivalent of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy?

François Duluc: No. As I said earlier, unfortunately we do not have foundations in France. It is not in our national culture. It is very frustrating. I work with the Westminster Foundation sometimes; I work also very actively with the German foundations—Friedrich Ebert and Konrad Adenauer—and I would like to do so in France, but unfortunately we cannot. That is why we have to be very creative in order to find other ways of working. What is important in the area of parliamentary strengthening is to avoid duplication, because in many countries everybody is doing the same thing at the same time, which is a huge waste of money and a waste of effort. You mentioned Burma. I met two years ago the clerk of the Burmese parliament, who told me, “We have now 40 different organisations that want to support us. We are candy of the week, but it is very difficult because it takes a lot of time to answer all these questions and sometimes we have the feeling that we duplicate the same activities.” It is important that there is better

co-ordination between the donors and the implementers. The role of UNDP and IPU in that field is essential.

Q45 Chris White: You have touched on it already a bit in your responses, but how do you think Westminster institutions could better access EU funding? Particularly, François, what would your experience be in relation to the French operation?

François Duluc: I have a suggestion to make. I have been in charge of many European Union projects. There are two kinds of parliamentary strengthening projects in Europe. You have the neighbourhood policy and you have the enlargement policy. As far as the enlargement policy, maybe it is difficult, because you are not a founder member of the European Union and you are not a recent member of the European Union. Usually, when we answer these bids, we try to create a consortium of two parliaments: a founder member such as France and a new member from Eastern Europe, which is able to share its experience of approximation of European legislation. England joined in 1972, so I do not know if you can be considered as an old member or a new member. I do not know exactly.

Chris White: That was down to de Gaulle, was it not?

François Duluc: I would not like to open this—

Chair: Scotland and Wales joined at the same time. So did Northern Ireland.

Chris White: You are getting on to very tricky ground.

François Duluc: Yes; this is a very tricky issue, I realise. What I would like to say is that as far as the neighbourhood policy, it would be interesting to have common consortia between France and the UK—between your parliament and our parliament. For example, in Morocco there is going to be in a few months a bid for a technical assistance project to the Moroccan parliament funded by the European Union. It would make sense to have a consortium between both our parliaments, and I am very open to discussion on this.

Q46 Chris White: Can I press you a little bit? The question was about accessing EU funding for Westminster institutions. Do you have any advice about how that could happen?

François Duluc: I was talking about parliamentary strengthening projects. I am not talking about other funding.

Chris White: Neither am I. I am talking specifically about parliamentary strengthening projects.

François Duluc: To access this funding you have to answer the bids. It is not possible in parliamentary strengthening to have funds from the European Union without winning a bid. It is very long. You have to enter a process where you have to write a paper—a very long one. After that, there is a selection panel. After that, there is a hearing such as this. It is quite difficult, but there is a lot of money. I know you have a debate in the UK about the European budget. I must say that there is too much money in these European projects. Sometimes we do not know how to spend it.

For example, in twinnings sometimes we have €3.5 million for two years. Parliamentary development is not expensive. It is not like elections. Elections are expensive—you need

a huge network, a lot of people on the ground and technical facilities—but for parliamentary assistance it is just air tickets, hotel nights and per diems. It is not expensive. It is difficult to spend €3.5 million in Albania or in Moldova or in Bosnia. Sometimes you have to make sure that the activities will be five days instead of two days, with four experts instead of two that could be able to do the same job. If you do not spend everything, the European Commission says, “You are not delivering properly on the ground” so you have to extend the length of the project.

I could tell you stories for hours about European funding in terms of parliamentary assistance. I could do the same and have the same results—or sometimes absence of results—with half of the funding they provide every year to parliamentary assistance projects. If it is the same in the whole area of international development, there is a huge way of finding money and budgets to support other activities.

Q47 Chair: In our previous evidence people were saying that sometimes you need long-term continuity, which is not quite so cheap, because serving MPs and serving officials do not have the time to make that commitment. Does the EU support that kind of work?

François Duluc: Unfortunately, the projects are designed for two or three years. After two or three years, if you want to extend the effort you have to do it through bilateral assistance or you have to ask the European Union to launch a new project in order to follow on from the previous one, which is sometimes quite difficult because it is very bureaucratic. You need to go back to Brussels to ask for the authorisation and then you go back to the national delegation of the EU; it takes two or three years, and between the two projects you have a gap and you cannot follow on from the previous efforts.

Q48 Chris White: Can I come back in again? I hope we are going to invite you back again, because it is most enlightening to hear some of your comments. The final part of the question, which I was going to say you were quite passionate about but you seem to be quite passionate about everything, is: do you think the French and British parliaments could co-operate and co-ordinate better on this particular issue in terms of parliamentary strengthening?

François Duluc: From my point of view, what is important is that we co-ordinate better between us, which we never did before. We never met with Crispin before last July, because it is difficult. During parliamentary recess I spend my holidays in London; he spends his holidays in Paris, so we cannot be together.

Chris White: It sounds like a film.

François Duluc: But now it is the third time in five months, so I think in the future we will be able to exchange on a more regular basis on these issues. It is the same with Germany. They invited me last year for the first time. We had very good discussions with the Bundestag on these issues. I think the three of us—the three most important national parliaments in Europe—could share on a more regular basis and try to find ways of working together.

Q49 Fiona Bruce: Thank you, Mr Duluc. I too have found your evidence most interesting, but I am going to give you a rest now because my question is for Crispin. If I

heard correctly, you said it is probably too soon to have seen any changes to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy following the triennial review. Correct me if I am wrong. What do you think should be the relationship between WFD and Parliament?

Crispin Poyser: As I said, I would be talking about the capacity-building side rather than the party-political side, which I see less of. On the capacity-building side, if the review proposes more of the same but better, that is something I am sure we would want to work with. When I say “better”, I do not mean that what has gone on before is not right. We looked at WFD during the review; there is scope for improving their awareness of how Parliament works in the areas of capacity building and how their skills could be perhaps upgraded to reflect that. We, in our discussions with them during the review, looked at what we might be able to do, and that would include things like perhaps offering to train some of the Westminster Foundation staff in the ways of Parliament. They are not themselves expert; they are intermediaries. As with CPA UK or BGIPU staff, they have not themselves worked as part of the staff, for the most part.

As I mentioned earlier with our general approach, if WFD have said that they are going to work in a particular country, if we can get up front in that planning process more than we have been hitherto, that could be more effective than the way we have worked in the past. As I said, the Clerk of the House said he would look at the possibility of seeing if we could second somebody to Westminster Foundation. We have worked very collaboratively in the past and we are willing and looking forward to working in the same way, and more so, in the future.

Q50 Fiona Bruce: Do you think there is enough collaboration with the House of Lords and in releasing the untapped capacity there of Members in particular?

Crispin Poyser: I am glad you asked that, because really a lot of what I have said so far applies jointly with the House of Lords. It is not entirely untapped. On the staff side they have been proportionately as active as we have been. In the EU field, they have been more active, as a response to the previous question. They have worked with, for example, the Hungarians, who, as François knows, are quite active in this EU twinning process, and they have come in as part of the Hungarian bid for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, and have worked heavily in that field. There are some areas where the House of Lords cannot contribute quite so fully as we can, not just because of numbers but because sometimes the emphasis is on a democratic house and it is not always appropriate for the House of Lords to deliver in quite the same way.

Q51 Fiona Bruce: But perhaps it is appropriate in committee engagement and that sort of area.

Crispin Poyser: Yes. When it comes to working with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, there is no difference between the Commons and the Lords.

Q52 Chair: At the beginning of this Parliament there was an attempt to create an overarching international office for the Parliament, which, as you know, was resisted, I think it would be fair to say, although for reasons that were not antipathetic to your office and not entirely antipathetic to the motives, but the CPA and the IPU are international organisations and felt that it was undermining their network. Given that that has not happened, what do

you think can be done and what role can you play in co-ordinating across the parliaments, including the work of DFID and WFD, if you have a role there? François, you have given us the French experience, unless you have anything to add. Clearly you do not have the problem of a multiplicity.

François Duluc: Unfortunately not.

Chair: But Crispin first.

Crispin Poyser: The position you have described is a factual one. It has some advantages in that we can let 1,000 flowers bloom. The fact that we have a CPA UK, a BGIPU, a Commons Overseas Office, a Lords Overseas Office and a Westminster Foundation means that they can all do their different things in a way quite flexibly and quite imaginatively, but it does lack a certain cohesion as a result. I do sometimes wonder how it looks to the outside world when they do not really know who they are interacting with when it comes to trying to get hold of the UK Parliament.

What can we do in the absence of what would have been an international relations department? It does come down to more systematic co-ordination and good personal relations between all the players involved. We have over the last few years tried to develop a more systematic, regular set of meetings between, in the first place, me, my Lords colleague, CPA UK—Andrew Tuggey—and Rick Nimmo from the BGIPU. We are including in that network the WFD and also the National Audit Office, which has not been mentioned this morning but is a big player in this field. We are putting in place such structures as we can to try to make sure that we do all know what each other is doing and we are contributing as effectively as we can within that.

Q53 Chair: What about a relationship with DFID? As I said earlier in previous evidence, if DFID were persuaded to do more, would there be some mechanism for bringing DFID into that mix?

Crispin Poyser: Yes. We have not done that so far on any systematic basis, but we would in principle be very happy to do so.

Q54 Chair: I do not know whether you have anything to add. I appreciate you have one fundamental body, so you do not have any sort of co-ordination issues.

François Duluc: No. Unfortunately—or fortunately; I do not know—we do not have that co-ordination issue because, as I said earlier, we are the only player. I would like to have more partners. We have a bit with the French Senate.

Q55 Chair: You are talking about the Assemblée Nationale and then you mentioned the Senate, but the discussion we had earlier was that there is a limit to what live parliamentarians and officials can do because they have their other jobs to do. Do you have access to resources of former deputies or former senators?

François Duluc: We try to access resources of retired staff and former MPs, but I must say that it is quite difficult, because—I have been in the National Assembly for 30 years—things change all the time and very quickly in all areas of parliamentary activities. We need recently retired staff or retired parliamentarians, and the problem is people stay 40 years when they are staff, and the parliamentarians in France very often stay for a long

time in parliament, so sometimes when they retire they are a bit old. We have that other issue that the older members of the staff and the older former members of parliament do not speak English and, as I said, most of the multilateral activities in the world are in English. The only possibility for us is the French-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa, but it is very limited because we have partnerships, as I said, with 80 national parliaments. It is difficult for me to find a proper expert. It is easier to have younger parliamentarians and younger staff. They are very busy—they are active—but they can manage to find a few days in order to support these efforts.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I said at the beginning this is an area of particular interest to parliamentarians and our staff given the involvement we have, and a number of us are on the IPU or the CPA executive, and all of us I think at some time or another have been involved in receiving or going out as part of delegations. We remain of the view that parliamentarian-to-parliamentarian contact is hugely valuable. Just to pick it up, one of the comments that was made earlier on was that our Foreign Office understands the politics of this perhaps better than DFID, so if we have a job to do as a Committee here it is maybe to try to get DFID to think more politically and see how it connects. The evidence you have given and the previous sets of evidence have been really informative and helpful, and I hope you will find our report of interest and of help. In terms of the Franco-British co-operation—which we have had also as a Committee, by the way, with our counterpart committee in Paris—we think it is good and productive and we hope it can continue. Thank you very much indeed.