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Inquiry on

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

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Witnesses: Ms Lindy Cameron and Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on
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Members present

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Chairman)
 Lord Black of Brentwood
 Bishop of Derby
 Baroness Goudie
 Lord Hannay of Chiswick
 Baroness Hodgson of Abinger
 Baroness Hussein-Ece
 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead
 Baroness Warsi
 Lord Williams of Elvel
 Baroness Young of Hornsey

Examination of Witnesses

Ms Lindy Cameron, Director of Middle East, Humanitarian and Conflict, Department for International Development, and **Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger**, Deputy Chief of Staff (Military Strategy and Operations) and Champion for Women, Peace and Security and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, Ministry of Defence

Q147 The Chairman: Good afternoon, and thank you both very much indeed for joining us. Of course you know the formula, but let me just quickly repeat it. This is an on-the-record session and we will send a transcript in case you want to tweak it if there is anything inaccurate. You have the list of interests of Committee Members. I do not think there are any new ones, so I suggest that we go straight ahead.

I will start by asking, General Messenger, if you could be kind enough to outline your department's approach to preventing sexual violence in conflict. Is it a mainstreaming approach or a dedicated strategy on the issue?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: I think our approach is to ensure that this, as an issue, is ingrained in the culture of the department. Do I think we are there at the moment? No. I think it is growing in profile. Awareness more broadly is growing—I would argue, quite quickly. Our aim is to absolutely mainstream it so that it is part and parcel of the UK Armed Forces wherever they serve.

The Chairman: Thank you. I call Baroness Warsi.

Q148 Baroness Warsi: Thank you for coming to give evidence. I have three parts to my question. First, how is PSVI incorporated into UK military doctrine? How is it operationalised? Is there a written policy?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Thank you. It is worth saying that although the Women, Peace and Security and PSVI agenda has been part of our business for a while, we are at a relatively early stage of formalising it and, as I said, mainstreaming it. Much of what I am going to describe is work that is under way but is yet to fully deliver. That is true in the doctrine world. We have an undertaking to make our doctrine gender-sensitive and to ensure that WPS and PSVI is incorporated where applicable in our doctrine.

I have a meeting on Monday next week, the purpose of which is to prioritise which doctrine we are going to tackle first and give direction to our doctrine centre on and the order in which it is to tackle this. Clearly, some forms of doctrine are more important than others; this forms a more prominent part in certain doctrines. The intent is to start with the important bits, incorporate them and to ensure over time that all doctrine, where relevant, is gender-sensitive and takes account of the WPS and PSVI agenda. Not all doctrine will. Anti-submarine warfare doctrine, for example, may not include it, but where we are talking about human interaction, I confirm that we are seeking to do that.

Baroness Warsi: There were other parts to my question.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Yes. On the question about operationalising, over the past few years we have demonstrated that this is an important part of what we do. We recognise that we are a global presence and deal in conflict areas where many of these issues are prominent and evident. A lot of our pre-training before deploying and a lot of our training of other forces takes that into account and in some cases is a central theme.

I do not think that we yet have an operational structure that formalises this in the way we do our business. For example, if a commander were to deploy with a force now, it is not mandatory or necessarily the first thing that will come into that commander's mind that there should be a gender adviser with that deployment. We are seeking to inculcate that in the system, and we are building our pool of gender advisers to allow that to happen.

On policy, the answer is yes. We currently have a draft policy, which will be discussed at my strategic steering group in the next two months. We are looking to lay down the high-level principles in it. We are keen that we have a consultative process to ensure that that policy covers the things that it should cover, and at a meeting in the Foreign Office last week I asked the community to identify the most relevant points of consultation to ensure that we have the right things included in that policy.

Baroness Warsi: Could I just ask a supplementary? This Committee will report in March next year. If the policy meeting is within the next two months and the policy is in draft format at the moment, it would be really important for the Committee to see that written policy before we come to conclusions. It would certainly reflect well on the MoD for us to say that you are actually doing what you are saying. Could you undertake to let us have a copy of that written policy before we report?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: I do not think I can say with confidence that that will be a non-draft, final policy by March. I would need to take some advice on whether it would be helpful for you to have a draft, given that we may continue to work on it. This is not me trying to avoid the issue; it is just that those timings do not appear to work particularly well.

Baroness Warsi: I just think that for the sake of the MoD not being criticised in our report, it could help to focus minds for you to go back and say that this Committee is reporting in March and it would be good for it to see, nearly two years on from the conference, what our written policy is.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Yes.

The Chairman: I am confident that we are not likely to be critical of the MoD anyway, so shall we just leave that one side? We are not yet deciding that sort of thing.

Baroness Warsi: No, we have not got to those conclusions yet, Chairman, but I think it would be important to hear from the ministry.

The Chairman: But just for the sake of knowledge.

Q149 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: We took some very interesting evidence from the former Chief of the Australian Defence Force on this matter. He seemed to have got a bit further than we have in this. Have you tapped into his experience? I have to say that he suggested that it had not been altogether easy to change the culture in the armed forces for which he was responsible, but he felt that they had achieved a major breakthrough. Are we factoring all that into our thinking?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: I have not spoken to the ex-CDF of the Australians, but I absolutely support your thesis that consultation with those who have been through this and have sought to change the culture is important. We are on a bit of a journey with other European militaries, and indeed with the American military. Most of the interface is forward, when we have people deployed. A lot of cross-referring and best practice sharing goes on forward. I would highlight in that regard the Kurdish region of Iraq, where we are training the Peshmerga and are incorporating PSVI training. We have a good relationship with other nations, particularly the Germans, but also a couple of other European nations, to ensure that we are delivering standardised packages and learning from each other's mistakes and experiences.

The Chairman: The Australian military, which Lord Hannay mentioned, told me last week that they had been training peacekeeping forces for three months before they are deployed. Is that something that the British military would look well on?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Yes. We will include standardised training in this area for all pre-deployment. We already do when we have forces going overseas to conduct training or participate in an operation. We include this training as part of their pre-deployment training, but it has been a little ad hoc and delivered by those who we have been able to co-opt. We have commissioned a training needs analysis, which sounds dull but which I think is important to standardise training. That will include basic training—ie, every new recruit will have it included in basic training. More meaningfully, pre-deployment training is really important so that as people deploy to these places, they have the latest thinking, something that is tailored for the theatre into which they are deploying. That will be an important part of this.

Ms Lindy Cameron: Perhaps I could just add that it is one of the eight commitments recently announced by Baroness Verma as part of the review of Women, Peace and Security. It is the third of the eight commitments that by November 2016, troops deploying overseas will have that training.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger: Can I just pick up on that? Will you at some point look at how effective the training is post-deployment? Do you have any plans to conduct debriefing about it and look in detail? Sometimes you might be able to learn a lot post-operationally about how effective the training was.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: I think we have to. I do not think that we have really tackled that yet. In many cases, that will be working with the international organisation that the troops we are training will be working under. We have trained a number of Malian soldiers for the EU mission in their country. You know that we have done a lot of training of

United Nations peacekeepers, often specifically in this area. It is in our interests to work with those international organisations to identify the effect that the training has had. I confess that that will not be easy. Measures of effectiveness in that area are sometimes difficult to quantify and be objective on, but it is essential that we try.

The Chairman: Baroness Warsi, this is still your question. Do you have any more supplementaries?

Baroness Warsi: No.

Q150 Bishop of Derby: We have just been talking about training for people about to go into theatres of conflict. Beneath your doctrine and policy, it is about getting it into the bloodstream more generally of people who are serving. We understand from your activity matrix that new entrants receive one hour of diversity and inclusion training, supplemented every two years by advanced diversity training. That is obviously an attempt to gear people up. In relation to PSVI and WPS, what do you think this training is delivering from the perspective of those issues? How can we monitor it to see whether we need to increase it or develop it in any way?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: There is a very clear linkage between how an organisation deals with diversity and inclusivity and how it deals with WPS and PSVI issues when deployed. Obviously, we are concentrating and focusing on our D&I training and D&I culture for broader organisational benefits, not least to try to improve the ratio of women and ethnic minorities in the military. There is a really important crossover in the cultural point that I started with. At the very forefront of the policy that is in draft is that our own behaviour needs to be utterly exemplary if we are to position ourselves at the leading edge of this effort among the world's militaries. We take examples of where we fail to deliver exemplary behaviour very seriously.

Bishop of Derby: Will you be able to build into the training plan an evaluation through these lenses so that you get a more general view of the mindset and attitudes of people in the Armed Forces who you have tracked?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Is your question related to measures of effectiveness again? Again, cultural shifts are necessarily difficult to measure.

Bishop of Derby: They are hard to measure, but you are investing in this training and we are concerned with these particular angles on it. It is important that it is effective, and it is important that besides reacting when things go wrong—as you say, failure, you learn from—proactively you can improve the training by assessing it and evaluating it as you go along. It would be interesting to know how you are going to prioritise that.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: I see what you mean. In any systems approach to training—and by committing ourselves to a training needs analysis, it is exactly that process that we are embarking on—an assessment of the effectiveness of that training is a really important part. That is true of the D&I stream. It is also true of the WPS-PSVI stream. Yes, I take your point. That is part of the systems approach to training that we have set under way.

Q151 Baroness Goudie: Following on from the Bishop's question, we will have new deployments for peacekeeping, going into Somalia and South Sudan. I take it that these will have women as part of the group that is going. How will they ensure that they will be able to work with all the groups on the ground—not just the military but the government and

women's groups, and other groups working together, men and women? Both areas are very tricky and difficult.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Yes. We have not yet finalised the exact nature of our mission on the UN commitments we have made to South Sudan and Somalia.

Baroness Goudie: Another question is: how many people do we expect to send?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: We are probably talking about the low hundreds in both. In South Sudan that is likely to be for about a six-month period each year for three years because of seasonal issues—the sorts of enabling and infrastructure support that we intend to deliver cannot be delivered during much of the year—and a permanent presence in Somalia. On the exact nature of that, we have teams out there at the moment working with the missions to ensure that we are delivering on that. However, it is a real opportunity for the British military to make its mark in the United Nations, which is an area where we have been underrepresented recently because our priorities have been elsewhere, and it is our very real intention to use the WPS agenda as something that we can focus on.

So, yes, there will be women as part of the deployment. It is our intention to ensure that there is a gender adviser as part of at least the South Sudan mission. We have not yet looked at how we can leverage value from having that expertise in the theatre. However, you are right as regards access to females on the ground, encouraging females to participate in the political process, and as part of conflict resolution. I think everyone sees the potential in that, and we need to try to unlock as much as we can from these deployments. However, I would not want to overpromise on this—these are relatively small deployments in very difficult parts of the world. However, I can reassure you of our intention to try to get as much value from it as we can.

The Chairman: Would it be possible to try to use these specialists in encouraging women to come forward and in ensuring, as far as that adviser can do so, that women are incorporated into the peacekeeping process subsequently? That would seem to us to be a highly good thing to do, and very specific.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: It is a really important thing to do. What I cannot state with confidence now is that a military gender adviser would be the key that unlocks that. However, if we deploy with that as a principle focus, it can only help. For example, the SRSG in South Sudan is a female, and that is key to unlocking some of the things that you have described.

The Chairman: Before I come to Baroness Kinnock, Baroness Hussein-Ece wants to say something.

Baroness Goudie: Can I just ask one quick supplementary question? Which country do you feel in military terms has the cutting edge? I know that as a country we are leading this in a very positive way, but is there a military team around the world that you feel is at the cutting edge?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: I think that some of the Scandinavian nations are very strong on this. They have very sensibly taken a strand of conflict resolution that they were very strong on in the 1980s and 1990s. They have a very strong brand, if you like, of being very gender aware. That is where we need to take our Armed Forces and our department. If the UK gets into that as a brand overseas, that will carry a lot of weight, because we are more prominent overseas than many of the nations I have just described.

Q152 Baroness Hussein-Ece: Thank you very much for your evidence. My question very much follows on from the previous question about deployment of troops in Somalia and South Sudan. I particularly wanted to focus on South Sudan. All reports have described that sexual violence there remains extremely prevalent, in fact unprecedented, and very wide-ranging. Previous witnesses who we have questioned on this have said that it was exacerbated by impunity and the fact that there was a lack of the rule of law and legal institutions. I know that the Prime Minister announced that the UK was offering troops to the African Union and the UN to mitigate terrorism and migration, but surely for the purposes of what we are doing here—PSVI—that has to be a key component of the role of some of these troops and advisers who are being deployed there. That has to be tackled. Even though you have said that the numbers are quite low, British troops cannot be there and not try to do something to tackle it or even to highlight what more needs to be done internationally to tackle this evil.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: We are going to deploy into a very challenging area, and we need to try to do as much good as we can. We need to be quite open-eyed as to the difference that relatively low numbers of troops will make. None the less, if we go into that theatre with that as an express objective, we can make as much as we can out of that deployment. It would be wrong of us in that theatre to do this through anything other than through the UN lens. This is a UN mission we are part of, so everything we would need to do would be with the support and through the aperture of the United Nations. However, I absolutely agree with you that we need to try to get as much value from these deployments and try to do as much good as we can from these deployments.

Ms Lindy Cameron: In addition, the UK military does not operate in isolation. This is something that we look at across the Government. South Sudan is one of the UK's—DfID's—successful programmes on tackling violence against women and girls. We have a very successful mobile health clinic programme and a DFID partner operating in the same area that has high rates of reporting of sexual violence from men and boys. Therefore we look at this as a sort of DfID-MoD-FCO integrated approach rather than just a military one.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: That is a really important point. If I come across as betraying a departmental position, that is misleading. This is a joined-up, cross-departmental effort. We regularly meet with our senior colleagues, and at the working level there are very frequent meetings that look at how each department is working with the other to ensure that we meet the pledges we have made. So yes—we are talking on behalf of our departments, but this is a very joined-up effort.

Q153 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Could I just say, General, how extremely welcome the enthusiasm with which you are approaching these new deployments is, and your recognition that we have been rather absent from the UN field for some time? It is very good news. Could I ask you something really quite sensitive? If by any chance, heaven forbid, there were allegations of sexual violence against one of our own troops deployed in one of these missions, or indeed the ones we already have deployed in Cyprus, what is the policy with regard to the handling of that accusation, and if justified, of bringing them to a court martial or trial of some kind?

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: That is absolutely our approach: that if there is an allegation, it would be investigated; the individual would be withdrawn from the front line while that investigation is completed. There would be a review point as to whether that

individual returns to the front line or was sent home while that investigation continued, and if found worthy of trial, that individual would undergo a court martial. That has happened—in very, very few occasions, but it has happened.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: Mostly what they do, for instance in the Central African Republic, is make the arrest and then send them home, and there is no guarantee at all that any action will be taken. That remains a problem. You mentioned South Sudan, where the conflict was so grave and so difficult that we can talk as long as we like about the solutions, but the leaders in that country are fighting each other the entire time, and that makes it impossible for people such as you to do what you want and need to do in that situation.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Messenger: Another example is that we have deployed training teams in various places in Africa. They are predominantly responsible for training the forces of nations in the AU or the UN. We see those as platforms for the cross-Government effort. We work very closely with the Stabilisation Unit to ensure that we are delivering that training to law enforcement specialists. Sometimes it is good to have a civilian instructor; sometimes it is good to have a military instructor. We are able to use that cross-Government single-mindedness to ensure that we are tailoring the training appropriately.

Ms Lindy Cameron: It is perhaps one of the benefits of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund that it allows us to look cross-departmentally at funding, rather than just dealing with departmental silos.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: I just go back to the World Humanitarian Summit, which you mentioned. It sounded to me from your answer that we are going to be very reactive rather than proactive. If you sit and wait for the UN to produce its document, you will then be playing catch-up. What are we doing to inform the UN of what we think the approach should be? I have to say that we are a little frustrated, because we keep asking questions about the World Humanitarian Summit, and the replies that we get are cast in language of such generality as to mean everything to no one, or nothing to anyone.

Ms Lindy Cameron: I will do my best to address that, in that case. I do not know whether you realise, Lord Hannay, that the UN is in an extremely long and detailed consultation phase in which there are 1,000 flowers blooming and it is listening to many voices. I went to the concluding part of that not long ago in Geneva. It has taken an extremely consultative approach; one reason that it is hard to be specific is that thousands of different ideas have rained in about what the Summit might tackle next year.

Women and girls is one of the four priorities for the UK that we want addressed at the Summit. You are right to say that there are still months to go before we pin down exactly what it will look like. We are looking for a really bold commitment to gender equality and specifically an expansion of the Call to Action at that Summit. I was talking to my Swedish colleague—as you know, Sweden was one of the co-founders of the Call to Action—about what we might do there. We want them to play a leading role on that as well.

Women and girls is only one of the issues that we are looking at. One of the biggest for us is humanitarian financing. As you probably know, we are at an unprecedented peak of humanitarian crises in the world right now. One key challenge is how the humanitarian system finances that huge set of crises on a sustainable basis that both prevents and responds to crises taking a multiyear approach. That means that we are not simply

staggering from year to year, we are looking at it strategically. There are a number of big issues; this is only one of them.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Could you let us have more specificity before we start to draft our report? That would be very valuable. I hate to suggest this, but it might be quite valuable for you, too, because I very much doubt that we will disagree with your priorities, but we may be able to give them some support, if you could only tell us what they are.

Ms Lindy Cameron: Yes, certainly. I will happily write to you with more detail on that.

The Chairman: Baroness Hussein-Ece first, and then Baroness Hodgson.

Q154 Baroness Hussein-Ece: My question is this: you mentioned our experience in Afghanistan. We have had women MPs come over from Afghanistan, and some of us have had roundtable discussions with them. This was before the British troops pulled out. They were concerned about the significant funding that we were committing to Afghanistan for women; as you mentioned, it is one of the four priorities. They were concerned that, after withdrawal, a lot of that funding would not reach women. They kept impressing on us that they wanted it protected or ring-fenced now. Colleagues and I have asked this question of Ministers and other officials on a number of occasions, and there always seems to be resistance. Do you know why that is? If violence against women and girls is a priority, why is the funding not being earmarked or protected in some way? If it is paid over to the Government there, there is no guarantee that it will be protected. Why is that not a priority for us?

Ms Lindy Cameron: Women and girls are absolutely a priority for my Secretary of State, the Secretary of State for International Development. One challenge for us is how you count it, because we run many programmes. This goes back to the first question that you asked my colleague about how we deliver. Part of what we are doing is ensuring that we look at women and girls in every programme that we run. A consequence of the International Development (Gender Equality) Act is that we have to identify what we are doing about that. Some programmes are specifically focused on violence against women and girls, particularly in emergencies. Others, such as in the health sector, may both look at general health benefits and have an element focused at addressing specific health needs.

When you talk about ring-fencing, sometimes you might be looking at only a small part of the spectrum of what we are doing. In Afghanistan, specifically, we have secured a commitment to long-term funding and support after the troops pulled out. That was part of our multiyear development commitment to ensure that we sustain some of the gains that have been made.

Baroness Hussein-Ece: Do you not think that, specifically on preventing sexual violence, there is a case for funding for projects to be protected?

Ms Lindy Cameron: I personally think that it is better to see it as part of the whole of our programming and to make sure that every programme that we run considers gender issues as part of it.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: The women always raise with us that their organisation should be given the money directly, rather than having to go through some rubberstamping performance, when they lose it because others have more power and authority. Women

from Afghanistan in particular have terrific willingness to organise their own lives and objectives, but they are unable to do it because the money just does not get to them.

Ms Lindy Cameron: I completely agree about how impressive some of the people you are talking about are. Some of the most impressive people I met working in Afghanistan were female MPs. One of the challenges for the World Humanitarian Summit is how we build the capacity of local organisations to respond. Of course, we have a responsibility to the UK taxpayer to make sure that money is well spent, so part of the challenge for us is building the capacity of small, local organisations in a way that means that we have the assurance that money is well spent. Sometimes that can be a tricky balance. Sometimes, for example, it means that we work through other, larger civil society organisations to build capacity rather than immediately and directly through those local organisations, but that is something that we are thinking about.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger: Following on from my colleague's comments about Afghanistan, one of the issues has been that lobbying and advocacy are never funded. Therefore, the women's movement has faltered. Money goes to projects, not to helping them have capacity to organise themselves for advocacy. In all these countries, there is a terrific need to help the women's movement there to co-ordinate, which it does not have the capacity to do. It is very hard for them to get funds for that. That has hampered the women's movement there quite badly.

Turning back to the World Humanitarian Summit, it has been suggested that the UK should make its contribution to common funding pools and through a common allocation to gender-based violence programmes. To what extent is prioritisation of actions to prevent GBV incorporated into core funding agreements with different agencies?

Ms Lindy Cameron: That is a very good question. Our broad partnership principles with governments include looking at human rights. In terms of core funding arrangements with large UN agencies, it depends on the agency. As I said, we have an obligation to look at the gender impact of all our programming, so it is one factor that we consider in every business case that goes to our Secretary of State. How much detail we go into depends a little on which agency we are talking about. If it was UNFPA, for example, we might look into it in greater detail. In terms of our humanitarian support, one thing we are asking others to do is to mainstream their approach to women and girls, particularly violence against women and girls, much more seriously. That is something that we are doing better and asking others to do better: to prioritise that as part of a broad approach to protection of civilians, so that it is not an add-on, it is one of the core issues of protection that we think about in every context.

Q155 Baroness Goudie: Good afternoon. I am worried about the whole question of quotas, which you feel is important. I can see why in certain circumstances it is really important. In which areas could we stop having quotas? I know it is a long way off, but do you see a time, planning long-term, when we would not have to have quotas?

Ms Lindy Cameron: I would sincerely hope so, in the sense that that is true in every country, including in our own and in other countries.

Baroness Goudie: I know that it is part of a peace agreement, which I agree with, to have women at the peace table, and to get the parliamentary situation to 50:50—there is no question about that. But in the long term, do we forecast that it might become the natural way, without having to do it with quotas?

Ms Lindy Cameron: It is context specific, so it depends on the country. Obviously, it is ideal to reach a context where we do not need to set quotas. We know that peace agreements are more effective when women are involved, so there are choices for us when we see contexts in which women are underrepresented, and we know that that is a threat to the potential success of a peace process. That is obviously when with diplomatic colleagues you have to make some tough decisions about at what stage you push for what. Therefore, in a very fragile conflict situation such as in Syria at the moment, peace would be so much better an outcome than the violence, you may in a sense be looking at what you do afterwards to rebuild and reinforce it rather than making a condition on the road. However, in some contexts, perhaps at a very local level, where you can see that a peace deal will not work unless women are involved, a longer, slower process might result in a more stable peace agreement. So it depends on the context.

Baroness Goudie: If I can come back to the peace group and ensuring that women are at the peace table, some diplomats—not British ones, as far as I know—want to get it done quick and fixed, and do not want to give women time because they do not think that women are capable of accepting it. However, peace starts when women say, “We have had enough”. We know that that is documented in a number of places, and we have seen that. As Britain is a leader in the world on this, is there no way in which we could try to have it written in that there is no way in which we could discuss the peace without having women? Quite often, local women have sat outside the peace conferences and peace places, and there are potential women leaders there. Through different sources we will work—I do not mean us here—with organisations and groups globally that know the future leaders, because they come in and out and we give them awards, work with them, mentor them—they are there. So there is no reason for them to say, “There aren’t any women”.

Ms Lindy Cameron: No, I completely agree. To be clear, the first of the eight commitments Baroness Verma made in our review of 1325 and follow-up to Women, Peace and Security is that we will shine a torch on peace processes to ensure that we are always thinking about how to involve women in peace processes and how to improve their involvement. You cannot rule out the possibility that there are contexts in which that will not have happened at the beginning of the process. I would not want to stop or slow down a process, but that has to be something that we understand as necessary for the success of a long-term process. Peace will not be reinforced unless women are at the table and helping to reinforce the deal.

Baroness Goudie: How, then, do we influence the United States, which will never have time, although it gives it lip service? I can just see in Syria that they want to walk in and finish the deal.

Ms Lindy Cameron: By taking it seriously ourselves.

Baroness Goudie: That is why I have to ask you the question. I want it for the record, because the way the US handles peace is completely different to the way anybody around this table would handle it.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger: Can I just back up my colleague? Perhaps this is not your department, but when you saw the picture of the Vienna conference two weeks ago, it was completely depressing for those of us who have spent time working on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. There were 21 people in the room and only one woman crammed in at the back—none around the table. We have to change this if we are ever going to have peace in Syria. I think all of us find it very disheartening after all the work and the wonderful

summit that took place here last year. So I hope that the UK will try to resist participating unless there will be some women there.

Ms Lindy Cameron: Given the seriousness of the situation in Syria—and you are right that that is probably a question for my Foreign Office colleagues—we need to try to make as much progress at Vienna as we can. This is the first chance that we have had at peace for Syria in some years, and it is essential that we do everything we can to try to make it succeed. However, I agree with you that that picture is not a good reflection of society in general, and we know that 50% of the population is excluded if there are no women at the table, so we know that to make peace processes a success we have to think quite hard about how and where to involve them. It is clearly the case that in violent civil wars, where you have a series of parties to the conflict, it makes it more challenging, because there are not large numbers of female representatives of the armed groups, for example, who are getting together to have conversations about who is involved in the opposition discussions, for example. Therefore it is a challenge, particularly in violent civil wars, but we know we have to focus on that to ensure that peace processes are sustainable and will result in long-term peace rather than a short-term ceasefire.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger: And long-term peace for everybody. We need also to keep trying to influence the UN. At Geneva II, Brahimi did not let the groups of women in that were there.

Ms Lindy Cameron: Absolutely. We also know how much women are suffering in this conflict. The vast majority of refugees are women and children. This conflict has had a disproportionate impact on civilians, so it matters hugely to women that this conflict is resolved.

The Chairman: I am going to move on to Baroness Young, please. We will have one more question only, because we have to finish by quarter to four for Baroness Anelay.

Q156 Baroness Young of Hornsey: This is to Ms Cameron. What are the implications of the increasing emphasis on security and justice programming? We touched on this in the previous session, as potentially there might be a risk that preventive work such as long-term programmatic work to change attitudes and behaviours will be side-lined at the expense of, for example, trying to counter extremism and the securitised response to sexual violence in conflict.

Ms Lindy Cameron: I have to say that for us at DfID there is no chance that that will crowd out prevention. If I go back to the World Humanitarian Summit, one of the things we absolutely know is that prevention is cheaper and better than response in almost all situations of humanitarian action. So it is absolutely the case that one of the things we do as DfID is think about both what we can do to prevent violence against women and girls and how we can help to respond to it. It is essential that we do not allow ourselves simply to respond, but think about cheaper and better ways to get up there. One of the benefits of DfID is that we do not have humanitarian and development silos. Our work spans the whole spectrum. Therefore as a result we can therefore think about the very long-term development interventions that help us to think about that prevention side, as well as having the short-term surge ability to respond at scale in humanitarian crises such as Syria or Iraq.

Baroness Young of Hornsey: In the evidence we had previously regarding the FCO, a very clear link was made between women's rights and counterextremism. Some of us were putting the point that that may not necessarily be conducive to promoting women's rights as an end in itself. What you just said suggests that there is a position there, and that we need a bit more communication and dialogue between the MoD, DfID and the FCO on where our priorities are.

Ms Lindy Cameron: I do not think that that is the case. In a sense, we each bring different skills to the table as a department, and part of DfID's strength is looking at the 20 or 30-year development horizon in the country and about what we can do now that will result in long-term outcomes for the next generation of women. We bring that particular strength to it as DfID, which is different to the strength that my Foreign Office colleagues bring.

We recently reviewed our programming in 2014 and looked at how our programmes overlap. We aim for four things when we are tackling violence against women and girls: providing comprehensive services, building political will and the capacity to respond to violence, changing social norms, and empowering women and girls. Most of the programmes we run tackle more than one of those objectives, so they are not siloed—in a sense, they are quite integrated. Now, we also have a large programme that looks at how we build the evidence-base for preventing violence against women and girls. This is a complicated area, and particularly in the area you referred to of tackling extremism it is quite complex to dig into both what works to prevent extremism and how extremism impacts on women, and what women's role is in that. It is complex and sometimes contradictory. So it is important that we challenge ourselves on understanding in detail what works, so that we can do more of it.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. Thank you again Lieutenant-General Messenger, it was most kind of you, and thank you Ms Cameron. Would you be kind enough on our behalf to pass our congratulations on to Baroness Verma on being appointed as Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Overseas? Thank you very much also for your very helpful and timely contributions.