

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: The work of DFID, HC 661

Wednesday 14 September 2016

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Dr Lisa Cameron; Stephen Doughty; Mr Nigel Evans; Jeremy Lefroy; Wendy Morton; Albert Owen; and Mr Virendra Sharma

Questions 1 - 90

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for International Development; and Mark Lowcock CB, Permanent Secretary, DFID

Examination of witnesses

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP and Mark Lowcock CB.

Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon, everyone. Sorry for the slight delay; we had an unexpected Division on a ten-minute rule Bill. Welcome. I particularly welcome the Secretary of State and say publicly what I have said to her privately: congratulations on her appointment and we look forward to working together on a cross-party basis between the International Development Committee and her and her team of Ministers in the Department of International Development. Welcome back, Permanent Secretary. We have a lot of ground to cover and, as I mentioned when we spoke yesterday, we will be keen to see you both again quite soon, because there is obviously a number of issues that we will want to explore in more detail.

Let me kick off, Secretary of State, with a general question and a specific, related question. What do you see as your main priorities for DFID? Reading your piece in today's *Daily Mail*, you described some aid as being "stolen" and "wasted on inappropriate projects". Can you give us some specific examples of what you found that has led you to that conclusion?

Priti Patel: Sure. Chair, let me start by saying thank you for your warm welcome and I look forward to working with the Committee, but also learning from many of the reports that you have published and the



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insights that you have, and making sure that we continue the very collaborative ways of working established under my predecessor, who of course has a very strong record in the department in a range of areas.

I do just want to say a couple of things in terms of direction of travel for the department. The United Kingdom has a very proud record in the development sphere as a global leader on development. I believe passionately in the mission of my department in terms of ending extreme poverty, promoting the prosperity agenda, and looking towards building a safer world when we look at many of the conflicts and areas of instability that we see.

As for where we are going as a department, we are using our leadership role, in particular, across the globe to challenge, change and reform the global development system so that it seeks to deliver for, yes, the world's poorest, but also British taxpayers as well. Yes, there are processes in place, good transparency processes, all of which have been set up by my predecessors, and I commend them on that, but there is more to do certainly on the global development agenda in that sense.

With regard to the point that you made about where we are seeing areas of challenges, interestingly enough, in the short period of time that I have been in office, cases and examples have been highlighted: for example, just this weekend alone, British aid money, taxpayers' money, is being spent to send activists on conferences around the world; and we should consider the work of my predecessor where funding has had to be suspended, particularly in terms of corruption and things of that nature. We have seen cases where we have had to stop payments. We were funding a cult in Malawi; that was another example that came up during the summer. It is important to make sure that we are spending taxpayers' money in the right way.

In fact, the other remit that I have is making sure that taxpayers have a better understanding and greater insight in terms of what their money is doing in the development space. I will certainly be focusing much of my effort on how that is having such a strong impact and positive outcome around the world.

Q2 Chair: As a Committee, we welcome that you have recommitted the Government to the 0.7% target. Are you able also to absolutely commit again to DFID's continued existence as an independent, standalone department?

Priti Patel: Completely. If I may put this in the context of my last seven weeks—it feels longer than seven weeks—importantly, in terms of the 0.7% commitment, it is the way in which we work towards spending that 0.7%. Yesterday, I was quite public about transparency, accountability and value for money, but again the focus is looking at the need, so this does not just become a binary discussion about money—that we are targeting the need and focusing the resources in the right place.



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Obviously, the department has an incredible reputation internationally. Also, when we look at the way in which our partners around the world lean into DFID as well for skills, for expertise or shared learning, of course that will continue. Certainly, over the last seven weeks I have been getting a stronger feel for that and, secondly, I have been working with and speaking to many of my counterparts, because they recognise the great value and significance of DFID as a department, but also the expertise, shared learning and practices that we have.

Q3 Stephen Doughty: Secretary of State, it is a very big statement to say that too much of our aid money has been stolen and squandered, and you have given a couple of examples. You could find examples at any point in DFID's past where things have not gone right; nobody would deny those. Can you tell us, as an exact proportion of the budget, either monetarily or percentage-wise, how much you believe has been stolen and squandered from our budget?

Priti Patel: I am looking across a range of our spending right now and let's just put this into context as well. For much of the spending, not just in DFID but when it comes to other ODA spending as well, business cases are put together.

Q4 Stephen Doughty: Do you not have a specific figure then, Secretary of State?

Priti Patel: I have suspended payments over the summer on some of the projects that I have just referred to.

Q5 Stephen Doughty: What percentage do they represent of the overall budget?

Priti Patel: That is taxpayers' money.

Q6 Stephen Doughty: What percentage do they represent, Secretary of State?

Priti Patel: That is sizeable sums of taxpayers' money, in the millions and in terms of percentage that is still a significant share of UK taxpayers' money—

Q7 Stephen Doughty: What percentage, Secretary of State?

Priti Patel: —just on three cases, and of course I will continue to look at the effective spending of taxpayers' money on need. This is the other thing: I do not think we should just focus on sum totals and binary figures. This comes back to my point about giving confidence to UK taxpayers as well. We have to ensure that their money is being spent on need, on the right examples, in the right parts of the world in a way that delivers the kinds of outcomes we want. That builds trust and confidence not just with the taxpayer but also within the wider global aid community.

Q8 Stephen Doughty: It could also be argued that building trust and confidence requires not using very grand statements that you are not



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able to back up with statistics, Secretary of State. You have given some very specific examples of where you think things have gone wrong in the past. Who is to blame for that? Was it the right honourable Member for Sutton Coldfield or the right honourable Member for Putney or is it the civil servants in your department?

Priti Patel: Let's just put this into context when it comes to development spending. First, both the Coalition Government and the Government that was led by my right honourable friend and former Prime Minister David Cameron set up very clear mechanisms of accountability and transparency. In fact, my predecessors should both be commended when you look at the establishment of ICAI and the very significant role that plays too. I have already touched on the fact that we have businesses cases where, obviously, the cases are presented and Ministers and officials, in-country as well as in the department, look at the need at that particular time and the way in which support can be delivered through a range of partners. Some of those relationships are not necessarily in our control, and I am sure you are fully aware of this too, recognising the fact that we are operating in many complex and challenging parts of the world. My point is that there are good processes in place, but we must always be challenging in terms of how we are spending that money, focusing that money on need and making sure that we are focused on the outcomes.

Q9 **Stephen Doughty:** I do not disagree with those broad principles, Secretary of State. Can I ask you some specific questions?

Priti Patel: If I may finish, I have been in this role for seven weeks, and over that time I have had a number of cases presented to me, ones that I am looking at and have looked at and made decisions to stop payments where clearly the original objectives are not occurring. We have since taken action.

Q10 **Stephen Doughty:** I am glad you have committed to the 0.7% target and to keeping DFID as a stand-alone department, which stands in contrast to previous things that you have said. You have, however, appointed a special adviser in your department who has been a very big critic of the Department, who previously said "hitting an arbitrary spending target is not something to celebrate" and that DFID was "unaccountable, bureaucratic and wasteful". Is he now along with your sort of thinking? Secondly, do you still support the death penalty? You are on the record on *Question Time* on 25 September 2011 saying twice that you supported the death penalty. It is quite important to DFID's work on human rights.

Priti Patel: On your last point, in particular, I have been very clear at every opportunity, and I will say it for the benefit of this Committee and the honourable Gentleman as well, that those references have been completely taken out of context. I have made that point several times. I note you are shaking your head in disagreement.



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Q11 **Stephen Doughty:** We have the quotes.

Priti Patel: They were taken out of context, so you can either take that from me factually now—

Q12 **Chair:** Are you referring to the remarks of your special adviser or the remarks you have made on the death penalty?

Priti Patel: Exactly, on the latter point in particular. For the record, they were taken out of context.

Q13 **Stephen Doughty:** You do not support the death penalty.

Priti Patel: I have said that several times, so let me be clear about that. With regard to my special adviser, that is an appointment that I have made, but obviously I am setting out now, as Secretary of State, my vision and my priorities, working with my colleagues and with my Permanent Secretary and officials in the department and, of course, my colleagues around the world as well. My priorities are clear. My special adviser's views that were stated many years ago are not reflective of the day-to-day work that I am undertaking in the department.

Stephen Doughty: They are not correct now.

Q14 **Dr Cameron:** Congratulations on your new role. In your short seven weeks in office, has it assisted you in viewing aid as crucial to development and perhaps revising your previous position, where you spoke of DFID as being low priority and suggested it be abolished and brought into the Foreign Office?

Priti Patel: First, there are a number of points that I would like to make. DFID is a respected department internationally. Look at the size, scale, and footprint that we have and look at the work that we do in many challenging parts of the world. We have a proud record and British people do as well, in terms of their own contribution to humanitarian causes and supporting real crises around the world, and DFID plays a leading role in that. That is important context to put forward.

I completely believe in the mission of my department. My department is incredible in the work that it does and in its leadership as well, obviously, with Mark here and the Permanent Secretary's role in terms of the work, the expertise and experience that DFID has. Absolutely, we will continue with gusto in our humanitarian support and the way in which we work with partners around the world. There are endless countries and regions where DFID leans in, where we are working with multilateral organisations. We touched on Syria earlier on today in questions. We have the UN General Assembly next week as well. The list of burning issues, the crises, the global challenges is not getting shorter, and DFID has a very important and strategic role to play in all of those big challenges.

Q15 **Dr Cameron:** Do you no longer believe that it should be abolished as a department and brought into the Foreign Office?



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Priti Patel: I have never said that it should go into the Foreign Office. DFID, as a department, leans into other government departments. We work across government. We have cross-government ways of working. There is a cross-government strategy on, for example, ODA spending, and of course that continues. It is really important to say as well that DFID, as a department, leans outwards across government departments. We are integrated in our ways of working. We join up with the Foreign Office, with the Department for International Trade and other departments, and that is really important when we look at the nature of the global challenges and the global crises that we are confronted by.

Chair: Thank you. We are going to explore some of those issues in further questions.

Q16 **Fiona Bruce:** Congratulations on your appointment. May I apologise? I am leading a debate in Westminster Hall at 2.30 and will have to leave. The *Telegraph* reported that you plan to leverage the aid budget to build new trade deals, and today the *Daily Mail* reports that you plan to make aid deliver for our national interests. I wonder if you could expand on that and let us know whether your focus on trade deals will mark any shift towards tied aid.

Priti Patel: First of all, you are absolutely right in terms of focusing on national interest, and if I can just unpack that a bit, that is very much within the global context that, of course, disasters, conflicts and diseases do not adhere to national borders, and we need to act before those types of problems and crises grow and become a direct threat to us. This comes back to the point about working across government with other government departments, looking at some of big issues that we face. If we look at Syria, there are the flows, the mass migration and the impact that has, and the fact that DFID steps in in so many ways, but obviously on the migration front in terms of the support in the camps and in big areas of policy such as education as well. It is in our national interest to make sure that we are stepping up and that we are being leaders and obviously pulling up other countries as well in those particular areas.

The legislation is very clear in terms of trade, but that does not stop us continuing our work across departments in particular. I am very clear that, post the EU referendum, there are new, exciting opportunities and new partnerships that we can develop around the world, basically, which can strengthen further our national interest. Obviously, working with the Department for International Trade we have a global footprint; the Department for International Trade and the Foreign Office also have a global footprint, so it is about how we can bring our two teams together in-country to work much more strategically and look at some of the levers that we have as well, in terms of programmes and projects.

Q17 **Fiona Bruce:** Thank you. Obviously, you have a £12 billion aid budget to work with, but in recent years DFID's focus has been to move towards working in increasingly difficult and complex regions, and fragile, conflict-affected states, with 50% of the budget being committed to those



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areas. How will the relationship with those countries tie in with proposed increased trade priorities?

Priti Patel: Obviously, in terms of development, economic prosperity is an enormous agenda—it really is—along with economic development. I am very clear that economic development is a significant area for my department and we have a great deal of focus on that and, of course, trade is part of that in terms of the wider prosperity agenda. Your point, however, in terms of fragile states, conflict and instability, we absolutely have to be in these areas and we are there. Of course, in dealing with some of the institutional instability and the fact that in many of these countries where we have instability there are no functioning institutions, we have a role to play, yes, through the aid budget, through DFID, but also through our expertise, working across government and bringing stability. That work will continue and will continue to evolve alongside, when we can achieve stability, looking at how we can move from aid to greater economic development.

Q18 Chair: Let me just follow up and then I will bring Albert in. You talked, Secretary of State, about conflict and a greater focus on conflict-affected environments. ICAI recently gave DFID a green-amber rating on managing fiduciary risk in conflict-affected environments. This question of risk is quite an important one and, clearly, in terms of the debate around aid potentially being diverted or wasted, as highlighted in your article this morning, is there a danger that in seeking to avoid waste one of the ways you do that is to try to reduce risk?

Mark Lowcock: Mr Twigg, our approach is to manage the risk however difficult the environment, and we do that by picking interventions that, even in the most difficult environments, we are confident we can deliver. As you know, we do not provide financial aid to governments where the fiduciary framework is not conducive; we work through partners. In the most difficult environments, the Secretary of State has asked us—and I am not going to go through all of this—to provide her with additional assurances because of one or two problems that I have had to draw to her attention. We are increasingly triangulating with multiple sources of information, so we get greater assurance of aid reaching the places where it is supposed to reach.

The Government have repeated that they want to reach the people in most need, as predecessor governments did, but they want assurance that we are doing that. That means we need a bit more corroboration, triangulation, we need to invest a bit more in monitoring and evaluation, we need to make better use of technology, satellite technology and so on. The worst place of all to be is to be spending money and then to find it is not getting to the people we are trying to reach but is being siphoned off by terrorists or organised criminals and so on. Unfortunately, the nature of the world is that there are more of those sorts of threats for us to deal with in protecting the money you are all voting, on behalf of the taxpayer, to us than there used to be. That is why we need this much



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stronger focus, as the Secretary has asked us to pursue, on value for money, transparency and accountability.

Q19 Albert Owen: I welcome the Secretary of State and the Permanent Secretary to this session and her to a new role. Following on from what Fiona Bruce said with regard to working together, I heard what you said in a previous response as well that other departments work together. I welcome your commitment to the 0.7%, but I am a little concerned when I hear the Defence Secretary saying in the media that, on peacekeeping, there is money available in other budgets. Do you envisage some of that 0.7% used for peacekeeping in very difficult areas of Africa etc., or do you see it ring-fenced for aid in fragile states, as you committed to? It is important, because there has been a big debate about the 2% budget in defence and, rather than increasing spending from the Treasury, that that money could come from international development.

Priti Patel: I have been very clear on the 0.7% that we will honour the commitments that we have made on development. They are very publicly listed as well in our manifesto and are very big and sizeable commitments. Of course, a well-financed aid budget is obviously there to deliver tangible results to the world's poorest in challenging parts of the world. I must emphasise as well, of course, we do have a cross-government strategy on ODA spending and that covers government departments. There is a complete programme, there is a structure, there is a framework in terms of how that money should be spent, and that covers the Prosperity Fund, for example, and CSSF activity too.

Q20 Albert Owen: I have all that; I am talking peacekeeping forces. If the British contribution to UN peacekeeping is needed, does it come from the defence budget or do you envisage it coming from your budget?

Mark Lowcock: May I give a technical answer to that?

Q21 Albert Owen: Could I hear the Secretary of State's response to that? I think it is important.

Priti Patel: I have outlined already the ways of working across government, but our commitment is clear in terms of what we do on the manifesto commitments and the delivery there and, let's not forget, on the huge humanitarian side as well.

Q22 Albert Owen: The Secretary of State for Defence has to go elsewhere to find additional funds—it is not from your budget. Do you want to add to that?

Mark Lowcock: There are rules that determine what counts as aid and what does not count as aid; they are set internationally. It is not that the department that spends the money determines whether it is aid or not. There are some peacekeeping activities that count as aid, because those are the international rules. Whether it passes through the MOD budget or the FCO budget or our budget is irrelevant to whether it scores as aid



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or not. The rules were broadened very slightly at the beginning of this year, because there was a wide agreement that there are some things that should appropriately be scored as development assistance, like training the military on human rights and sexual crime, which was not being scored as aid and was creating a perverse incentive. Both the MOD and we are doing more of that, but it only scores as aid because it fits within the rules. That is what the Government have told civil servants we must do: make sure we follow the rules.

Q23 Albert Owen: In South Sudan now, where the increased contribution from the UK to UN peacekeeping is going to come from the defence budget or the international development budget, is it going to be ODA?

Mark Lowcock: As I say, the current rule is that 7% of any country's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations count as ODA. In the UK system, the department that pays the UN peacekeeping budget is the Foreign Office. As it happens, we have a UK deployment to that peacekeeping operation, which the UK gets reimbursed for in the same way that all other contributors get reimbursed for, but the determining thing is the rules, not the government department that happens to be managing the money.

Q24 Stephen Doughty: Just to pursue this point a bit more and, to be clear, I am no purist on that interaction between development and security; there are very important things we need to be doing in tandem. Going back to some comments that have been made in the media, the *Mail on Sunday* reported that tens of millions of pounds were going to be diverted to fund the war on terror. That was obviously briefed in by, I imagine, your special adviser or somebody in the department. Can you just be absolutely clear, Secretary of State: is money going to be diverted from the DFID budget to the security services, to the MOD or to MI6, SIS? What is the basis for that sort of statement?

Priti Patel: Let me be very clear: no one associated to me or working for me briefed that in to a newspaper, so let's just be very clear about that. As my Permanent Secretary has already outlined, in terms of cross-departmental spending, ODA is there in line with the aid rules and what is scoreable as aid in how other government departments will spend that money, as per the cross-Whitehall strategy that has been agreed. This is not about diverting money from my department to any other parts of government.

Q25 Stephen Doughty: No funding will be diverted from your department. Will any funding be diverted?

Priti Patel: I am not, here, having that discussion at all.

Q26 Stephen Doughty: You will not give that commitment.

Priti Patel: I have not been involved in any of that. As I have just said, no one associated with me or my department has been briefing that into newspapers, so that is wrong.



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Q27 Stephen Doughty: Can I ask another specific question then? There is obviously a very important issue about our co-operation with other government departments in conflict zones and elsewhere. We heard South Sudan mentioned and I asked you in the House just a few minutes ago why the DFID budget to South Sudan is being cut in the next financial year. Can you explain why that is, given not least that we are going to be increasing our peacekeeping contribution there? Why is that?

Mark Lowcock: Mr Doughty—

Stephen Doughty: Can I hear the Secretary of State's answer first?

Priti Patel: In terms of the spending, I come back to the point that I made earlier about need. We have to recognise that this is not just about a sum of money; this is about need in particular and how we support the need. Everybody in this room recognises how difficult, how challenging and just how horrific the day-to-day ability to operate in South Sudan is. It is highly unpredictable and, if it gets harder, aid agencies themselves find it harder to operate, harder to deliver, and of course that has an impact in terms of what is spent, in particular.

Q28 Stephen Doughty: You cannot spend the money; is that the answer?

Priti Patel: There are a number of mitigating factors here as well, including not just risk but the operating climate. We are focused on need, not just the budget line, and, again, we have a combined approach around South Sudan across government, in particular, in terms of what other government departments are doing and how we work with them as well. I just emphasise again that we are, yes, spending money focused on need right now, but it is a difficult part of the world in which to operate.

Mark Lowcock: Can I just make a really important point? I am worried that other people may misunderstand what is going on with the budget. You have looked at the budget outturn for the 2015-16 year, the 188 figure in the budget, 165 for 2016-17 and 145 for 2017-18. Of course, you will also have seen that at the end of that table we have put the crisis reserve, which has £200 million in it. Exactly as the Secretary of State has said, the principle is that, depending on the need, that money will be available.

Q29 Stephen Doughty: The money could go up.

Mark Lowcock: The money could absolutely go up, if the need requires it and we can operate, and you are very well aware of the difficulties, which again the Secretary of State explained, of the operating environment at the moment in South Sudan.

Q30 Stephen Doughty: Are you going to seek any further changes, Secretary of State, to the DAC criteria on peace and security?

Priti Patel: When it comes to the overall DAC rules, they have been set, basically.



Q31 **Stephen Doughty:** You are not going to seek further changes.

Priti Patel: They have been firmly set and there were complex negotiations as well, so that is not an area that I am looking at.

Q32 **Chair:** We are going to move, in a moment, to Brexit and some of the implications of Brexit for the department, but there is one further question from me regarding transparency. Rightly, in your *Mail* article today, you emphasise the importance of transparency as a principle and you say that the department will require greater transparency from aid recipients. Can you tell us a little bit more about how this will work in practice, both with regard to contractors and multilaterals, who are such a major channel?

Priti Patel: Of course, absolutely. I touched on this briefly, but obviously I am working with many of my counterparts and agencies, in particular, in terms of the delivery mechanisms that we have and looking again at the outputs. I am looking at much of the monitoring and evaluation, as Mark has touched on already—how we get the balance of risk right and the objectives, because of course situations change in-country and in the difficult environments in which we operate—and ensuring, of course, that we are not haemorrhaging funds because situations change. For us, we will be looking again, not just working with ICAI but within our own processes and business-case process as well, to see what other checks and balances we can put in place to track, monitor and evaluate.

Q33 **Dr Cameron:** The EU currently receives nearly one fifth of DFID's multilateral funding, some of which goes towards projects that may extend beyond the date of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. How will the department ensure a smooth transition out of the EU, especially for crucial beneficiaries of UK and EU aid projects?

Priti Patel: Let me start by saying I had the privilege this week to meet many of my counterparts in Brussels, across EU member states, and there is a great deal of work that is taking place; there is no doubt about that. Also, it is not lost on me the reputation that the department has of being a leader in the development sphere and very much leaning into the EU institutions in providing support, guidance, advice—again, coming back to the skills and expertise—and, in fact, many secondments as well. I take the view that right now there are exciting opportunities in terms of ways of working.

DFID, as a whole, is making an assessment of how we will work not just with the European Union on projects but also with our partners. I have been clear with Commissioner Mimica as well this week that we will continue our collaborative ways of working. There are so many avenues of dialogue, shared interests, shared outcomes as well where we are all working together, and so we will have a constructive way of working with our partners across the European Union; I have no doubt about that. Of course, within the withdrawal process in terms of the negotiation process



and the timeframe, we will work across government, in the way in which other government departments are, on some of the issues about our contribution and how that will work.

Q34 Dr Cameron: Do you see any possibility for continued collaboration post-Brexit, to maintain some of the crucial project work that has been ongoing and where the date expands beyond that?

Priti Patel: I see no doubt that this will be ongoing in terms of our engagement. This is not a case of just walking away—absolutely not. As I have said, we lean in, we are very positive, we are very proactive in terms of ways of working; I mentioned right down to secondees and partnership working. That will continue. In all the discussions that I have had, certainly this week in Brussels, that is an area where, on both sides, we want to continue to develop.

Q35 Dr Cameron: DFID relies on the EU to deliver support to a number of fragile states where it does not have bilateral offices on the ground, such as Burundi and the Central African Republic. How will DFID adapt to deliver support to these countries without the ability to work through the European delegations and ECHO?

Priti Patel: I have already said we are at the start of this process. We are at the start of the discussions as well; I only met this Monday my counterparts across EU member states. I do not see this as a binary process. This is ongoing. This is a dialogue that is taking place. We fully recognise the European Union is working in difficult parts of the world where we, ourselves, do not have a footprint, but also, as I have said, as part of our exit negotiations we will make all the appropriate assessments. But I do want to emphasise as well that we will have a continued constructive way of working with our partners across the European Union. There is a lot of very important work that is taking place right now and, of course, we will have to assess not just programmes but the way in which support continues over the next few years as part of the wider discussions that we are having across government.

Q36 Dr Cameron: Apart from having dialogue, do you foresee a continued footprint in these countries and how would that look?

Priti Patel: We are at the start of this, so I am not going to give you a shopping list right now or even a blueprint of what this is going to look like. I cannot do that and I am going to be very clear about that. I do not want to raise the wrong kinds of expectations. I am very pragmatic and very practical in terms of the ways of working. We are going to have open dialogue. Our partners across EU member states recognise the leadership role DFID has taken in the sphere of international development. There are many issues that we still have to discuss as well with EU member states, and so this will be all part of the exit discussions and the negotiations, recognising that there are conflicts and challenges



around the world, and there are delivery systems and financial instruments that we have to fully explore together in partnership.

Q37 **Chair:** Once Brexit has happened, is it possible that we could voluntarily still take part in some of the European programmes? I am particularly thinking of the European Development Fund.

Priti Patel: This is a case of the art of the possible, quite frankly. I do not view this as a binary process immediately. We have to look at how we leverage skills and experience across EU member states, obviously, but also in terms of how we can still contribute. We are a global player, and just because we are withdrawing from EU institutions does not mean we cease to be a global player in the international development sphere. Our footprint is enormous. Our skills and experience are so significant. That is an active contribution that I have no doubt we will continue to make. Obviously, we will need to look at the mechanisms and the processes and the structures through which we make that.

Q38 **Chair:** Do you envisage there might be any reduction in our contribution before the completion of negotiations?

Priti Patel: That I do not know. It is very early right now. Obviously, until we leave we are committed to the contributions that have already been put in train, so to speak, so I see no change on that. This will be subject, of course, to the timetable as well in terms of leaving.

Q39 **Mr Lefroy:** Congratulations on your appointment. The Chair has already referred to the European Development Fund. Quite a large chunk of that has gone to ACP countries and specifically around, if you like, the inheritance of the French and British colonial and protectorate legacies. How are we going to ensure that those relationships are maintained, given that, at the moment, we only have 27 or 28 bilateral relationships, far fewer than the ACP relationships that we maintain through the EDF?

Priti Patel: First, we have to grow those relationships—we really do—and that means more opportunities that need to be scoped out, but also more partnership working as well. I am very conscious that in the informal Development Ministers meeting that took place on Monday, certainly with representation with the ACP, there is a whole dialogue and debate taking place regarding post-Cotonou right now as well and what that means. There is still very little agreement in terms of the direction of travel there. We are still in the position to input, influence and grow the bilateral relationship and have the influence while we are still members, but also we have to look beyond our membership of the European Union and how we can strengthen those relationships too.

Q40 **Mr Lefroy:** It would be very important that, for instance, we maintain those relationships, particularly with the francophone countries, which if we just rely on Commonwealth relationships, vital though they are, might be lost.



Priti Patel: That is right. We have to embrace new opportunities and be very positive and proactive in terms of not just those but every opportunity for developing new relationships and partnerships. Commonwealth countries are important and one group, obviously, that we know of, but the ACP is another category of countries that we have to continue that relationship with.

Q41 **Mr Evans:** Congratulations, Secretary of State. We are spending more than £12 billion on international development and some of that money is being channelled through the European Union to spend as they wish. Is it your estimate, like it would be mine, as a proud Brexiteer, that at the end of this development 100% of our spending will be decided by your department?

Priti Patel: I have already said that we are at the start of this process and we are making all the right assessments, not just in my department but across government, in terms of the overall exit negotiations. I do take the view that, of course, we do have a contribution to the European Union—and it is a vital and valuable contribution as well—in terms of development spending, so we have to put it in that context. Outside of the EU and outside of our membership of the EU when we get there, we will have control over that money that currently goes to the European Union. Obviously, that will give my department and the Government a greater say on how that money is used and leveraged in meeting our development aims, priorities and objectives. But I am not giving any commitments right now, because we are just at the start of this process and it is important to recognise that there is a process, there is ongoing dialogue and there will be negotiation. Certainly from my perspective, that is money that we will get back, obviously, as part of leaving the European Union, and that is money that we should, rightly, spend for our own development objectives to meet the priorities that the Government are committed to.

Q42 **Mr Evans:** When I was in Uganda recently, I did see UK aid badging on various things. If it is the case that we do decide unilaterally to support other projects around the world that may be supported by EU money from the other 27 countries as well, can we ensure that there will be proper recognition of British taxpayers' contributions to those projects?

Priti Patel: I just think this whole period in the run up to leaving the European Union as well is our chance to show global Britain in its totality, basically. Aid and the way in which we deliver it—the way in which British taxpayers fund aid and development and give support globally in many challenging parts of the world—is something that we should showcase. I come back to my comments to the Chair earlier that I would like us, and I hope my role as Secretary of State will be, to demonstrate to British taxpayers where we are spending that money, how we are spending that money and the good that it does globally. The example that you have given of Uganda is just one very good example of that.

Q43 **Mr Evans:** At the meeting we had, the Ugandan Health Minister thanked



the British taxpayers for the money that was being spent on the immunisation programme, so that is important.

Just one other point: we will be members for at least another year, so can I just ask you to use your influence with other European partners to try to get their spending on international development up to 0.7%? Some of them are quite deficient.

Priti Patel: This is a very important point and thank you for raising it. You are absolutely right, because we are out there trailblazing; we really are. We set the standards; we have the great commitments. At the same time, part of my conversations on Monday were very much on that basis: what other countries are doing, can be doing and should be doing. In fact, next week at the UN, in particular, there is a fantastic opportunity, when we think about some of the big global challenges, the crises and the conflicts that we will be discussing, ranging from Syria to Yemen and when we look at some other parts of the world as well, to really put a spotlight on many countries that simply can do more and should do more. They have the resources and the ability, and while we have been leading the way, we can really pull them up to do more.

Q44 **Wendy Morton:** Many congratulations, Secretary of State. I want to move on and ask about the Sustainable Development Goals or the Global Goals, as they are very much called now, because you will be aware that it is almost a year now since the world leaders met at the UN to agree these. Here, in our Committee, around April, we asked the then Minister for Government Policy, Oliver Letwin, about them and he told us that the Government would produce a report on the implementation of the SDGs. I know you have spoken previously in this session about focusing on need and working across departments, so I wonder if you could give us an update and maybe a timeframe for publication of this report. I would be interested to know if DFID is still leading on the Government's international and domestic implementation of these Goals.

Priti Patel: Very clearly, in terms of the role of the Cabinet Office—and, of course, Oliver Letwin came in front of the Committee—I am doing exactly that, working with the Cabinet Office. We have a lead role in looking at the implementation of SDGs across government. We are very much working not just with the Cabinet Office but across government departments as well. It is fair to say, in terms of timetable, I will come back to the Committee and be much more specific, but I simply cannot be on the detail of when the various components of this will come together. We have a single departmental plan, which outlines a lot of the commitments and the ways of working, and we are working towards that, but that is all I can say at this stage in terms of the cross-departmental working and taking up with the Cabinet Office on this. I do not know, Mark, if there is more you can add.

Mark Lowcock: Ministers have asked civil servants to prepare collectively the report and we are doing that, and then, as I think we have said in the response the Government has just issued to your



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important report on this, the report will come out in due course. Once the civil servants have done the work, the ministerial process then needs to go forward.

Q45 **Wendy Morton:** Can I just get it absolutely clear: is it DFID or the Cabinet Office that is taking the lead on this piece of work?

Priti Patel: In terms of across government, it is the Cabinet Office that will be leading on this.

Q46 **Wendy Morton:** Right; it is not DFID.

Priti Patel: No.

Q47 **Chair:** Which Minister is it?

Priti Patel: It will be Ben Gummer, so I am engaging with him on this.

Wendy Morton: Right, okay, that just clarifies things. We were under the impression previously that it was DFID that was taking the lead, so thank you very much for that, Secretary of State.

Q48 **Chair:** Can I press you on “in due course”? Are we likely to see this report by Christmas?

Mark Lowcock: I hope the Secretary of State will not mind me saying this, but you have pressed me before on the timing of report-issuing, Mr Twigg, and the world has intervened and one or two things we thought were true, on the publication of other reports, have turned out, because of events in the world, not to be true, so probably we have said as much as we should sensibly say on the timing.

Q49 **Mr Lefroy:** Just to continue the theme of reports, when will the multilateral and bilateral reviews be published? They were supposed to come out in the spring; obviously various reasons have delayed them, but they must be ready.

Priti Patel: They were due to be published, I think, on the day that I was appointed. It is fair to say and reflect upon the fact that since they were drafted quite a bit has happened politically, obviously, in terms of events—the referendum, the change in government and administration—and so I and my team have been working through the reviews as they were drafted. We have been making changes on the reviews as they stood when I came into the department, and I am looking to publish them. It is not going to be tomorrow or next week, but certainly they will be coming quite soon.

Q50 **Mr Lefroy:** I am thinking particularly, obviously, of the Multilateral Aid Review and the Global Fund. You are going to make an announcement this weekend, presumably prior to the publication of the report on the Global Fund. Can we be assured that the results of these Multilateral Aid Reviews, both for the Global Fund and other things coming up, like IDA, are going to be key to the input for the decisions on that? We have not had a full MAR since 2011.



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Priti Patel: No, I am absolutely conscious of that.

Q51 **Mr Lefroy:** We had a refresher in 2013, but it is vital, given the work that is being done, that it does feed into the decisions that are made.

Priti Patel: In answer to your question, yes, in every single way.

Q52 **Mr Lefroy:** Good. Just finally on that, presumably because they have not been published, the multilaterals themselves are not yet aware, or have they been given some kind of interim assessment that they can then come back to you on with their comments?

Priti Patel: We are in constant contact with all the institutions and organisations, and so we are very fluid in our ways of working and discussions with them. It is an open discussion that we have with them, so they are very much part of the process, it is fair to say.

Q53 **Mr Lefroy:** It is important that we know when these are going to be published. Can we expect them, let's say, by the end of October, because it is vital?

Priti Patel: I cannot be date-specific, but I am pretty certain that they will be almost ready to go by the time we get to that period, effectively.

Q54 **Chair:** You kindly indicated previously, and your predecessor did, that we would have some sort of advance notice of when they are coming.

Priti Patel: Absolutely.

Q55 **Chair:** These are quite significant. Would you envisage there might be a statement to the House—an oral statement or a written statement?

Mark Lowcock: That is what your predecessor has done, yes.

Q56 **Chair:** A written statement or oral?

Mark Lowcock: I think, the first time around for the MAR, the then Secretary of State did an oral statement, if I am not wrong, in early 2011. I cannot remember for the MAR update in 2013, which Mr Lefroy just referred to. That may have been a written statement.

Q57 **Chair:** I am going to come to Albert now on the Civil Society Review, but is the plan now to go back to what was planned at an earlier stage and publish all four reviews together, bilateral, multilateral, civil society and research?

Priti Patel: First, Chair, let me just say that when they are ready, we will absolutely make sure that the Committee is engaged and gets to know what is coming and when. We are, obviously, getting everything ready to publish. I am not quite sure of the sequencing yet, because, as Mark has pointed out, there are always external events that we have to consider with regard to publication; there is that factor, so I cannot really be specific on that. But I would like to give the Committee an assurance on timing that you will get to know exactly when they are coming, and I do not think you are going to be waiting months and months, basically.



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Chair: Thank you.

Q58 **Albert Owen:** As you indicated, Chair, I want to continue the theme of delayed publications and of the Civil Society Partnership Review. It is not whether we are worried about it; there is a lot of uncertainty by NGOs and organisations, and they cannot do their long-term planning. You want value for money; they want to get on with the job. That is the reason for our anxiety for getting these reports out, and I am sure you understand that. Could you give an indication of what you are doing to mitigate any potential damaging effect of a funding gap, which many organisations could be facing from December?

Priti Patel: As I have already mentioned a number of times, we have a very open way of working as a department, and we have been working with a lot of NGOs and organisations with regard to the particular review. My Minister of State, Rory Stewart, has held roundtables and had many discussions with them all, so they do understand why we have changed the sequencing in terms of publication. They fully understand that. I recognise, obviously, some of the points that they have raised too, but also they were given about a year's notice of the timetabling of the reviews and some of the changes and processes that were going to take place around this review.

Q59 **Albert Owen:** Sure, but it would be helpful if they knew what was going forward as well.

Priti Patel: I would say that they do, because they have had the dialogue. We are talking to them, so they are constantly engaged by us and, as I have said, our Minister of State has seen them. We are in constant contact with them. The department is very open and has spent a lot of time with the organisations in question.

Q60 **Albert Owen:** On that theme, what steps is your department taking under you to increase the support of the diverse civil society in the UK? You talked about getting your minister to do roundtables. Is there anything else that you can offer the civil society to foster and support them in some way?

Priti Patel: Ways of working are crucial in looking at key projects. Where they have the right kinds of skills and expertise, it is about bringing that to the table, absolutely. We are looking at how they can work with us on programme delivery, project delivery. This is an ongoing way of working—it really is—and we engage them at every single level. There is an important point to make here about funding. NGOs recognise that they cannot just be dependent on core funding from one department and are working to diversify the range of funding and the way in which they work with us as well, and that is possible through the wider engagement that we have with them.

Albert Owen: I will come back on something else later.

Q61 **Chair:** I will bring in Lisa in a moment, but let me just pursue that last



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point, Secretary of State. Civil society obviously has a role to play globally and the work that they are doing in other countries is really important, but they also have a role to play here as advocates, and concerns have been raised about potential new rules from the Cabinet Office regarding the ability of NGOs in this country to be advocates. Is that something that the department is focused on—something that is being looked at again?

Mark Lowcock: Of course there is legislation on lobbying, Chair, and that applies across the sector. There is other legislation that has been brought in over the last 15 years or so that governs the sector too, and it is absolutely the case that organisations funded by the department are expected to be compliant with UK legislation, so the situation has evolved, including on what is appropriate for other organisations to do with the funds they get from government.

Q62 **Chair:** Advocacy, in terms of making a case that relates to the core mission of that body and that is in no sense partisan, in political terms, is still something that DFID would welcome, presumably.

Mark Lowcock: As I think the Committee knows, the total level of funding from the department for civil society has continued to grow. The thing that some organisations would like is for the Government to continue to provide core funding through the PPAs. As the Secretary of State said, more than a year ago the Government made clear that the core funding through the PPAs would end at the end of this year, and that has been repeated ad nauseam, frankly. Of course, a lot of the activity that gets financed through the wider set of schemes overseas is raising issues of a lobbying and advocacy sort, like human rights, and that is an important role that civil society plays in developing countries, which is consistent with what the Secretary of State said.

Q63 **Chair:** I was going to come to that next, but also they complain in terms of our debate in this country. For example, we are going to have a question later on the Yemen situation. Regardless of the rights and wrongs, a variety of NGOs have made a very strong argument about the impact of UK policy in Yemen. Surely none of us would want to see that restrained.

Priti Patel: No. That is central to their role as well and obviously making the case is clearly what they do.

Q64 **Chair:** Good. Good. Thank you. On the role they play internationally, one of the issues that this Committee has raised for some time is the concern about a shrinking civil society space in many of the countries that are DFID recipients. Will that, in part, inform what you are looking at with the Civil Society Review? For example, Fiona Bruce is not here, but she asked me particularly to mention Bangladesh and concerns around the shrinking civil society space in that country, and the importance of what the UK can do to support local civil society as well as our own NGOs that might be working there.



Priti Patel: It is worth reflecting. Bangladesh is a very good example of where we have a considerable DFID footprint but also partnership working in particular. Of course, where the voices simply are not there and where there is a capacity or the ability to grow and work with the right kinds of organisations in that space, yes. That is effectively what DFID does in terms of all the humanitarian aspects and building some of the capacity as well that is required for the functionality of society, and so that is an important component.

Q65 **Dr Cameron:** I apologise, as I am going to have to leave shortly. NGOs have raised concerns regarding the potential of the great women and girls' agenda that your predecessor raised being diminished in some way. Can you reassure us today and reaffirm the commitment that you, Secretary of State, will champion women and girls and that will continue to be a priority.

Priti Patel: Absolutely. This is not a concern that has been raised directly with me, and I have been clear from the outset in terms of support for women and girls. I spoke about this at Questions earlier on today, and this will be a central theme at UNGA next week, and of course Britain is a leader here and has done tremendous work. I would just like to pay tribute to my predecessor, because she was a very strong advocate. She really put the United Kingdom on the map internationally in this space, so I recognise that I have big shoes to fill in that area and I certainly look to do that.

Q66 **Chair:** Thank you very much. Let me move us on now to some questions around the allocation of resources and obviously we have already talked about the forthcoming aid reviews. In our interim report on this issue earlier this year, we made a recommendation that poverty reduction should be a legal requirement for ODA spending and should be re-emphasised as the primary objective of UK aid. The department's response was to reject that recommendation. There is a concern on the Committee about the lack of emphasis on poverty reduction in terms of the aid strategy that was set out last year. Can you reassure us that poverty reduction is still absolutely central to the mission of the department?

Priti Patel: I am going to be very clear about that. Absolutely it is. That is core to DFID in terms of what we do and our area of focus, alongside the work that we undertake in many countries around the world on economic development, working in partnership on those wider areas and issues such as education, skills and employment too. That is a core focus and I would not want to leave the Committee today with anybody in doubt about that.

Q67 **Chair:** That is reassuring. In a sense this is not a question, but can I urge you, as you frame the various reviews, to ensure that is there explicitly? Our concern, which we expressed with your predecessor and with Mark previously, is that whilst that reassuring commitment was given by the previous Secretary of State when she gave us evidence, it



did not appear in the material around the aid strategy. If it is there at the core of the reviews, that would be most welcome.

Mark Lowcock: I just make the observation that the department has no choice but to make poverty the requirement of everything that we advise the Secretary of State to agree to spend money on. That is the legal situation.

Q68 **Chair:** Good, and that is my next question: with the development of the Global Goals some of our international development legislation is looking somewhat outdated, because it was designed at a time when we were working towards the MDGs rather than the SDGs. Do you have any view about looking to bring the legislation up to date?

Priti Patel: I do not, on the basis that our focus now very much is on the Global Goals, on the SDGs, and our manifesto commitments too. They are very significant commitments covering a range of areas, coming back to saving lives, honouring our commitments, poverty, promoting gender equality. These are big areas, and absolutely that is the focus of everything that we do every day.

Q69 **Stephen Doughty:** I just want to follow up on that. It was good to hear what you said about poverty reduction, Secretary of State. Do you also believe that under your tenure DFID will remain committed to the Partnership Principles, which guide our spending as part of the DFID Smart Rules about how we allocate spending and through what mechanisms and to which countries and how much? Are we sticking to those?

Mark Lowcock: There are two different things there, Mr Doughty, and as the Secretary of State said earlier, we have not got to all of the detail. But the Minister of State has been tasked by the Secretary of State to look at the Smart Rules and has told the department, "Yes, this is what we want".

Q70 **Stephen Doughty:** Secretary of State, are you familiar with the Partnership Principles?

Priti Patel: Yes, I am familiar with the Partnership Principles, but let me just say as well that we are looking at many of the rules and frameworks that we have, and that is the right thing to do.

Q71 **Stephen Doughty:** Can I just ask you about one of the specific ones then? Partnership Principle number two is on human rights obligations and international obligations, which is very important, obviously, when you are dealing with countries that perhaps have a chequered record or otherwise on those. Going back to your previous comments, you were not clear about your views on the death penalty. Can I have a really straight, clear answer: do you support the death penalty, yes or no?

Priti Patel: The answer is no. I have made that very clear.

Q72 **Stephen Doughty:** You do not support the death penalty, okay, and so



you will continue to press countries that are using the death penalty.

Priti Patel: That is the role and I have done that previously as well in my other roles in government. I could not be any clearer about that. Let me again state for the record what my view is, which is, in answer to your question, no. Secondly, I have worked in other roles in government departments across the Foreign Office where I have gone internationally as well and had to raise many of these challenging examples.

Q73 **Stephen Doughty:** You will continue to raise human rights concerns.

Priti Patel: I will continue to do that.

Q74 **Stephen Doughty:** Okay. Obviously, we are dealing with a number of complex situations where multiple government departments are involved, not least in relation to Yemen, our relationship with Saudi Arabia and so on. How do you propose to deal with those, given the conflicting desires and perhaps wishes to push human rights issues and issues like torture and the death penalty?

Priti Patel: I take a very robust view on this. As a department, we have a job to do. We are very clear in terms of our core purpose. Yemen is a classic example. Look at just the tragedy that is there. It is unspeakable in terms of what is going on there. There is a humanitarian catastrophe and it is a forgotten conflict that people are not speaking up enough about right now. Of course, there are other associated issues that cut across other government departments here as well, and I will raise those points with my colleagues and work with colleagues in the right way.

Q75 **Stephen Doughty:** In that vein, given the current controversy should we suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia?

Priti Patel: I am not going to give a view on that, because I am focused on the humanitarian side right now. That is our focus, and when we go to the UN next week, shining a spotlight on what more we need to do there is the right thing to do.

Q76 **Stephen Doughty:** But DFID has a role, Secretary of State, in signing off those arms export certificates, so what will you be saying to the other three departments that are involved in signing those off, given what you said about the humanitarian situation? We released a report that was very complimentary about DFID's work in Yemen and we have been very positive about it, but there are some conflicts there and it is about what you do in relation to other departments. What will you be saying to those other departments?

Priti Patel: Of course, that is a collective approach that we have to look at across government departments. It is not just a case of what I am saying; it is looking at the situation and looking at resolution—the resolution in-country and getting a political outcome as well. We are leading the humanitarian side, but obviously there is work that is required in terms of HMG and that political resolution too.



Q77 Chair: On that, we have said that, as a Committee, we think there should be a fully independent inquiry into alleged violations of international humanitarian law rather than one that relies on Saudi and Yemeni investigations. There is an opportunity at the UN Human Rights Council that has just started for that to be addressed again. Is this something where the Government are reconsidering the position that it took a year ago at the UN Human Rights Council?

Priti Patel: I will work with colleagues and I will discuss that with colleagues, quite frankly. But as I have said, my immediate priority is very much the humanitarian situation. I will be leading a session next week just on the humanitarian side and, importantly, getting other donor countries, international countries, to step up. As I have said, this is a completely forgotten crisis and it is a crisis beyond all comprehension.

Q78 Chair: Absolutely. As Stephen Doughty said just now, we very much welcome the commitment that DFID has given to the humanitarian response—the £85 million that has been committed. My understanding is that, more generally, the global commitment is only 32% funded at the moment. Can you tell us a bit more about what you will be doing and saying next week to try to get that closer to 100%?

Priti Patel: I can, absolutely, Chair. I have already started conversations with many counterparts around the world. Over the summer, I have been teeing people up in terms of asks and requests of them. Next week, I will be co-chairing a session just on the humanitarian side of Yemen and the fact that, yes, we are there, we are doing good work, but obviously there are big asks. There are financial asks from other countries and we will not be shy in what we are asking other nations to step up to. That will be part of the discussions that we will be having. We will be asking for more pledges and we will be asking for more activity and more support.

Chair: We would very strongly welcome and support that. Whatever differences among parliamentarians there might be on the arms sales issue, on the question of the humanitarian response we are absolutely as one and welcome what you have said today.

Q79 Albert Owen: Certainly, Secretary of State, on this Committee Yemen is not forgotten. We have held an inquiry into it and it is ongoing work as far as we are concerned.

In the articles we read overnight and your opening statement you mentioned value for money. Can I ask you a specific question: do you think DFID has enough administrative staff capacity to manage its relationship with contractors, ensuring they provide value for money, and to hold these contractors to account? How are these frameworks working? What experience have you had in your seven weeks to get to the nub of this?

Priti Patel: It is quite a timely question, not just on the basis of newspaper articles.



Q80 **Albert Owen:** Yes—it is very helpful for us to get that.

Priti Patel: In the last week, we have also had our supplier conference, again with full engagement from the third parties and contractors that we work with. We discussed with them very frankly the standards that we have, the specialisms that they have, the innovation that they bring, absolutely, but also the way in which we manage them and the way in which we have SROs in place to have the oversight and to structure the partnerships and the contractual process.

In answer to your question, yes. There is always more that we can do, primarily because again it depends on the countries that we are operating in and the contractors: how they are delivering on the ground, and making sure that there is greater oversight if circumstances or conditions change in-country or in markets from the contractors' point of view. That delivery side is crucial, and we have a management programme that oversees the way in which the contracts are put together and the way in which our SROs also lean in and oversee these processes.

Q81 **Albert Owen:** One of the reasons we raise this is because there have been complaints from subcontractors and smaller companies that the framework agreements that are in place risk centralising power in a small group of large companies. The question is whether there is enough administrative oversight for that, so that we can have smaller groups working with specialism and that they can be properly looked at so they are giving value for money. Permanent Secretary, do you accept the fact that there is centralisation of larger groups?

Mark Lowcock: Fiona Bruce is not here, but she has asked us questions about this over a period and so we have been on the case. I can report to you that the proportion of contracts going to SMEs in the last year was 32%, which is the second highest across government. The number of private sector suppliers we have has grown by more than 30% over the last four years, so there are larger numbers of small businesses accessing the department. We think that is a good thing, and that is reflected in the fact that we had 200 partners from the private sector at last week's suppliers conference, which the Secretary of State talked about—by far the largest number we have ever had. The trick is to find a way that does not require lots more civil servants to be managing these relationships. We need to be clear in our expectations, to have smart processes, e-enabled wherever possible, so that we can have an efficient system for engaging more suppliers that does not require too much public money.

Q82 **Albert Owen:** Are you acknowledging the fact that it is complex at the moment for some smaller companies to access the contracts?

Mark Lowcock: I am saying both that we are engaging more of them and we strive to make it even easier, so that that number of 30% growth over the last four years becomes a bigger number.

Q83 **Wendy Morton:** First, I welcome the Secretary of State's comments



about the need to get other donors to step up to the mark. We, as a Committee, have often raised that in our discussions. Following on from that, I wanted to ask about the Grand Bargain that was agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit in May. As you will know, this includes a set of very broad goals for major donors to achieve, but there are no specific targets and timelines in certain areas, particularly regarding the use of cash-based assistance and improving needs assessment. I wonder if you could share with us how you think DFID is going to ensure the implementation of all commitments in the Grand Bargain in the absence of these concrete targets.

Priti Patel: They are clearly very stretching, but from a DFID perspective, I had a very constructive discussion earlier on in the week with Stephen O'Brien about this very issue and how, collectively, everyone steps up, for a start. Again, our leadership plays a vital role in pulling others together in terms of stepping up. We have a strong voice and our commitments are clear.

I guess your question is more about the timing, the structure and some of the processes that we can put together, and it is a valid question. Perhaps we do need to look to formalise and structure this in a way that becomes much more, I guess, public and transparent, so that we can timetable it as well. I will happily talk to Stephen about that and go away and look at it.

Q84 **Wendy Morton:** On that, the Committee welcomes what you are saying about transparency as well. Therefore, do you think that an independent body to monitor this would help?

Priti Patel: We can set up bodies and have endless reporting as well. I simply do not know. I really do not know until we look at the processes that we can put in place and the sequencing that is required as well, potentially, but we need to think about that and have further discussions on it.

Q85 **Chair:** An important outcome of Istanbul was the work on education in emergencies, and we have just started an inquiry into the department's work on education. Are you envisaging some major development on that in New York?

Priti Patel: In short, yes, in the sense that, interestingly enough, many of my counterparts are much more focused on education. It is probably worth me sharing that I spoke to my Canadian counterpart yesterday and I pressed again for the Step programme in Lebanon and how Canada could perhaps commit more in terms of funding and resources there. There is a growing recognition across the donor community around the world of the need to focus on education. There is real recognition, absolutely, and understanding across the community of the role of education and the good work and the compacts that have been put together and put in place.



We have to sustain that, and I think a lot of the discussions next week will focus on the sustainability of that and continue this to a new level that focuses not just on education but also the skills piece in particular. With the skills piece, you can educate and skill people, but they will need jobs to go to. Again, it is the sequencing and how we can, collectively, at an international level, provide the right structures, the right support, but also start to work with the private sector, in a way. Indeed, I was really encouraged to hear broad recognition around the fact that we need greater partnerships with the private sector, because they are the ones that create the jobs and they need to be there in many countries, being a strategic partner in how we bring them in in the right way.

Chair: Thank you very much. That is certainly something this Committee has consistently argued: the importance of jobs and livelihoods as well as proper investment in education and skills.

Q86 **Mr Lefroy:** Earlier this week, some of us were at a session with Stephen O'Brien and he highlighted the tremendous problems in north-eastern Nigeria particularly and the millions of people in the area of Maiduguri in Borno State who are dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on assistance. He compared it to peeling back a sardine tin where, as Boko Haram is pushed back, the need appears. The figures that we were given in terms of the people who were in need of assistance were far greater than I had heard even on our Committee visit to Nigeria in March. According to the figures we have to date—and, indeed, there was an article in the *Economist* on this a couple of weeks ago—the UK's contribution to the overall UN funding requirement for Nigeria is 2% compared with, say, 8% for Syria. We very much welcome the UK's contribution in Syria, but given our particularly strong and close relationship with Nigeria and the particularly escalating problem there, I wondered if you were considering increasing humanitarian support for the UN appeal there.

Priti Patel: We all recognise the enormous challenges facing Nigeria across the board.

Q87 **Chair:** Secretary of State, there is a division. I am conscious of time. Would you like to complete your answer and then we will bring proceedings to a close?

Priti Patel: Okay. Recently, my Minister, James Wharton, visited Nigeria; I think it was only last week or 10 days ago. With his visit, we have announced additional funding of £32 million across the board, recognising the very challenging situations and much of the conflict that occupies that north-east area as well. But this is an ongoing situation and of course we are working at every single level, recognising there is a terrible conflict in north-east Nigeria. There is a substantial package that has been brought together, again across government, too, and, for us, it is a case of how we can deliver the right kind of support in a very challenging environment.



Q88 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I wanted really quickly to ask you about Syria and the current crisis and, in particular, the group of key local organisations in Syria last week suspending co-operation with the UN due to what they described as the manipulation of humanitarian relief efforts by the Syrian Government. Can you tell us what DFID is doing to ensure that the UN response in Syria is genuinely impartial and neutral, in line with core principles?

Priti Patel: Completely. As you would expect, Chair, we acted on this as soon as we started to pick up the reports and the concerns that were put in the public domain 10 days or so ago. We are working with all our partners and of course with the right organisations to look at every avenue, to make sure that funding, the delivery of aid, is going in the right way and not to the wrong people, obviously, associated with the regime, in particular.

Q89 **Stephen Doughty:** A lot of us heard very concerning reports of up to 100,000 people trapped in the berm area along the Jordanian-Syrian border. Perhaps in writing, Secretary of State, you could provide us with your assessment of that situation and what we are doing to get access there.

Priti Patel: I will and I should just say that I have had discussions with the Jordanian Government as well, and I raised many of the issues and the challenges associated with the berm. It just sounds horrific. There are many humanitarian issues that we are facing and need to be picked up.

Q90 **Chair:** Secretary of State, do you have to vote?

Priti Patel: Yes.

Chair: In that case, can I say a big thank you to both of you for coming to give evidence? We have covered a lot of ground in just under an hour and a half, but I do envisage that when we have the various reviews published we would like to have you back to explore them in more detail. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you. We need a bigger room next time you are our witness. Apologies to the members of the public who could not get seats. Thank you.