

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK](#), HC 885

Wednesday 8 February 2017

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 8 February 2017.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Lucy Allan; Tracy Brabin; Angela Crawley; Philip Davies; Mrs Flick Drummond; Jess Phillips; Mr Gavin Shuker.

Questions 136–234

Witnesses

[I](#): Emma Rourke, Director of Public Policy Analysis, Office for National Statistics.

[II](#): Caroline Dinenage MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Early Years; Lord Bates, Minister of State, Department for International Development.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Office for National Statistics](#)
- [Government Equalities Office](#)

Examination of witness

Witness: Emma Rourke.

Q136 **Chair:** Good morning. Please have a seat. Emma, can I apologise in advance that you are just the witness sitting there by yourself? I feel that it is most unfair of us to do that. I apologise on behalf of the Committee, but we were very interested in some of the evidence that we had received, and I hope you do not mind coming along and just helping answer some of our questions around the role of the ONS in the inquiry we are undertaking on Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Emma Rourke: I appreciate the invitation and I will do my very best to give you the information that you are seeking.

Chair: It is a relatively short session. We are having Ministers in afterwards, so we have about 15 minutes. We have some very focused questions to ask you, and Lucy is going to start off with a question.

Q137 **Lucy Allan:** Good morning. Could you please update the Committee on the progress that has been made in developing the national indicators for the SDG targets?

Emma Rourke: The ONS, as the UK national statistical institute, is responsible for the global goals and reporting the global indicators, not the national domestic progress specifically.

Q138 **Lucy Allan:** Can we have an update on the progress the progress that has been made to date?

Emma Rourke: For the progress against the global goals and the global indicators, we have had extensive engagement over the last year with a variety of organisations. We are planning to go out and consult on material that we have considered in the spring, and we have been discussing the application in a domestic UK setting with colleagues across Government.

Q139 **Lucy Allan:** There has been a delay in that consultation. I think it was due in November. Could you tell us why that was? We have had witnesses tell us that that was due to lack of Government support for the project. Is that true? What are your views on that?

Emma Rourke: No, it is not true. Before we go out to consult on any matter, there is always a pause where we consider, "Is this the right time? Are we going to have the impact that we intend to do with this consultation?" There were a number of factors at the time that we considered that led to the delay in the consultation.

The first one was the need to align with single departmental plans. What we are hoping to achieve by publishing a consultation after the single departmental plans are public is to give observers full line of sight from the global level all the way through to domestic implementation. Another factor that we considered was the work that we have been doing to



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support the race disparity audit, which is a prime ministerial priority. It allows us to explore further some of the disaggregated indicators in the spirit of leaving no one behind. In March, we now understand that the United Nations Statistical Commission is going to be considering a further 37 global indicators in addition to those that are already published and agreed. We wanted to make sure that our consultation was fully reflective of the position of the sustainable goals in their totality.

Q140 Lucy Allan: In terms of any further delays and how long this is going to take, do you envisage any stumbling blocks?

Emma Rourke: There is nothing currently on our radar that suggests we cannot go out to consult in the late spring. We know that things change. Not all of the framework of the global indicators is within our control, but there is nothing else that we think is likely to delay our consultation further.

Q141 Lucy Allan: How long will that consultation take, roughly?

Emma Rourke: We have yet to determine the exact period of time. It will depend on the content. It will depend on our intent and the breadth of stakeholders that we want to include. It will not be short. It is important to us that we engage with a wide variety in a meaningful way.

Q142 Lucy Allan: Is there a timescale in your mind that would be a satisfactory completion date?

Emma Rourke: I would say it would be months rather than weeks.

Q143 Chair: Could I just ask for some clarification? My understanding was that ONS was developing indicators that the UK Government would use to assess its progress. Is that correct?

Emma Rourke: The global goals and the indicators that reflect the UK progress against those goals are developed and disseminated by ONS.

Q144 Chair: The fact that you develop the global indicators is fine, but they are going to be used domestically here in the UK. What I am trying to get to is that, whilst it is very important that the UN has global goals and they are looking at a further 37 global indicators, we are interested this morning in exactly what the UK Government is working with you on so that we have a framework of local indicators. You are doing that.

Emma Rourke: The single, departmental goals are going to be the vehicle for the domestic, national indicators.

Q145 Chair: Yes, so you are going to measure it. They are not very good at measuring things; you are. You are going to measure it, aren't you?

Emma Rourke: Our role is a technical role. We are here to offer advice and support in creating the most appropriate and robust indicators. We are not a policy development institute. We will offer technical advice, which is where our remit and our skills lie.



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Q146 **Mrs Drummond:** I am just going to delve into that a bit more. We have had evidence that there is enough data in the UK to allow for a rough and ready assessment of getting the data, but not the specifics. What are the biggest challenges in sourcing data, particularly with SDG 5, and how are you going to collect that?

Emma Rourke: We already have quite large data sets, such as the census for example. We think that we can make good progress in linking that data set with other administrative data sets to achieve the granularity that is required. I have referred to the “leave no one behind”. That requires us to disaggregate data to reflect the experience of subgroups of the population. That is where things get more challenging for us. We do see the next 15 years as a journey where we will seek to take advantage of the data revolution and increasingly sophisticated technology to be able to exploit data that exists and will continue to emerge over that period.

Q147 **Mrs Drummond:** Have you got enough regulations and Government support to collect that data?

Emma Rourke: We do have the Digital Economy Bill, which is currently in train. We do have good partnerships with Government departments; some of those will be facilitated by the Bill but we do seek to exchange data across the GSS. There will be other bodies that come through through our extensive consultation, who will notify us and alert us to new data sets as well.

Q148 **Mrs Drummond:** You are very confident that you will be able to reach into all the sectors that marginalise women, for instance. Will you be able to collect data on that? Domestic violence involving black women was brought up in our evidence as well. Do you feel confident that you would be able to delve into the data for those sorts of specifics?

Emma Rourke: That is very challenging for us. As I mentioned before, with the data revolution we are expecting to get access to more granular data. We are expecting more information to flow digitally, and we will reach out and we will capture that and bring it in in a way that helps us get that insight.

Q149 **Chair:** I will just pick up on that point. As an organisation, you have quite extensive experience in working at a granular level in the development of the census, particularly working with groups like Sikh groups and other very small minority groups. Would you not bring that experience to bear?

Emma Rourke: We absolutely would, yes—very much so.

Q150 **Chair:** As an organisation you have probably proven that you can work at a granular level.

Emma Rourke: Yes, we most definitely have.

Q151 **Chair:** You would bring that experience to bear in this project as well.



Emma Rourke: Certainly—we have already engaged with colleagues in that part of the organisation, yes.

Q152 **Tracy Brabin:** We have had some witnesses who were saying that they did not feel particularly engaged with the work that you are doing. What have you got in place to try to engage with these groups on the ground and women on the ground?

Emma Rourke: It is a very important point and we are very conscious that there are bodies that have yet to feel fully engaged. We do welcome organisations approaching us, and we do have a track record of engaging fully, particularly through a consultation process. When we did our national wellbeing consultation, we have 34,000 responses. We are seeking to achieve the same level of engagement through this by using our skill in reaching out to those organisations. We are open for business on this agenda and we welcome involvement from a whole range of organisations.

Q153 **Tracy Brabin:** Their feedback is that they really do not feel engaged. Is there any appetite for bringing back the steering group or Gender Statistics Users' Group to engender engagement?

Emma Rourke: We are reviewing the way that we engage with a variety of groups. We are on a journey where we have engaged with those organisations that have been visible to us and that have approached us in the first instance. We want to build on that, and it may be that this particular group is a good vehicle but it is not the only vehicle. There will be a range of ways that we can mature our engagement model.

Q154 **Tracy Brabin:** Obviously you have a funding package; there is a suggestion that some of that funding could go to the groups themselves so that they could access the harder to reach groups and then report back to you. Is that something you are thinking of?

Emma Rourke: It is an option. We do have some very clear requirements for any information that is collected—as you probably know, we are regulated ourselves—if we want to generate official national statistics in particular. We would need to have a conversation about the standard to which the data are collected in order for us to use them as official statistics, but we are very open to gathering the right data.

Q155 **Tracy Brabin:** Is there likely to be any funding for that?

Emma Rourke: We have a budget that has been agreed through the spending review period, and we are in the process of determining how best we spend that.

Q156 **Tracy Brabin:** If there is no money available and the decision is taken not to do that, what plans are in place to increase collaboration?

Emma Rourke: As I said, we have a lot of experience in this area. We are looking to increase our profile and increase the way in which we extend the opportunity to other organisations. Where we may have been



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perceived as not being available for a conversation, we are very clearly changing that.

Q157 **Chair:** Can I just press you a little bit on a couple of those issues? The initial piece of work that you did to seek views, which I believe was between March and May of last year, did not involve any women's organisations. Given your track record in working with lots of different types of organisations, the Committee finds it quite surprising. Is that lack of proper consultation part of the reason the indicators have been delayed?

Emma Rourke: No, it was not a material reason why we paused or delayed the consultation, but we recognise that it is a very important point. The majority of our consultation was done through the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development. We will continue to work with them to make sure that we are reaching out to the right groups.

Q158 **Chair:** Why did you not manage them better, to make sure that the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, who have been before the Committee, engaged with women's groups? Such groups, after all, make up a substantial part of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goal 5, which this Committee is looking at. It seems inexcusable.

Emma Rourke: Yes, I agree. It is an area that we do need to invest more energy in and pay more attention to. I do not disagree with you. We were dependent, to a degree, on this particular organisation, and we will make sure that in future we have much more of a stronger focus on this particular group.

Q159 **Chair:** To what extent has the £6 million budget that you have been given been eaten up over the last 12 months by undertaking a piece of research that did not include women's groups and therefore needs to be redone?

Emma Rourke: We do not intend to redo the exercise that we have done already. That was an initial exercise. We have £600,000 out of the £5.8 million in year one. It is a tiered receipt of funds. As we skill up our team, as we increase our resource to be able to engage more broadly, more funding comes into the organisation.

Q160 **Chair:** I will just go back to the reason for the delay in publishing that we talked about earlier. To be clear, the refresh of the single departmental plans was announced after the delay, so I cannot see how it was a cause for the delay. I still do not think the Committee is very clear why the publication of the public consultation indicators was delayed from November. I still do not think we have had a clear reason for that. It cannot have been to do with the single departmental plan refresh, because that was announced afterwards.

Emma Rourke: As I mentioned before, there are a number of factors that potentially individually in their own right would not have caused the decision to pause. But in totality we felt that it was not a good use of



public money to proceed with a consultation when there were other factors that would potentially influence the content.

- Q161 **Chair:** I have a final question on this point. Will you be using the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development in the future, given that they failed to liaise with women's groups?

Emma Rourke: Yes.

- Q162 **Chair:** If you are going to use them, how are you going to make sure that they are able to talk to women's groups in the future?

Emma Rourke: We have to take accountability for the individuals and the groups that we engage with. We have a good relationship with the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development. They have been a very useful conduit to engaging some communities. We will take it very seriously to ensure that the full representation of society is engaged.

Chair: Brilliant. Thank you very much for your time this morning. We really appreciate it, and thank you for coming before the Committee at relatively short notice.

Emma Rourke: Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Caroline Dinenage MP and Lord Bates.

Chair: Thank you both very much for coming in front of the Committee today. I know you are incredibly busy, and I know, Minister Bates, as a Member of the House of Lords you will be covering many different issues. Thank you so much for being here, and I know the preparation time is extensive, so please take our appreciation. As you know—both of you have been in front of Committees before—we have a series of questions to get through on this really important piece of work we are doing around Sustainable Development Goal 5. We are going to be kicking with Tracy's line of questioning.

- Q163 **Tracy Brabin:** Good morning, both of you. I will start off with some broad questions. Where would you place the implementation of SDGs in terms of the Government's current political properties? Is it near the top of the list?

Lord Bates: Good morning, first of all. It is certainly very high on the list. The commitment that the UK Government showed towards securing the successors to the MDGs—the SDGs—was very strong from the high-level panel chaired by the former prime minister, David Cameron. That followed through into the SDGs. It is a very core strategy, as the Prime Minister set out in her first address to the UN General Assembly last September. This was reinforced through various strategy documents that



we have, such as the UK aid strategy, and of course that is then going to feed through into the single departmental plans, as you have just been hearing. We would say that a core part of the Government's strategy is to deliver and implement the SDGs.

Caroline Dinenage: I would agree. We invested very heavily in agreeing the goals in the first place. As Lord Bates says, the fact that we have embedded them in the single departmental plans shows the commitment across Government. It is mainstream through Government, rather than a tick-box exercise on the side. Speaking from the Government Equalities Office, goal 5 embeds everything that we are always trying to do; it is sort of the ethos of the Government Equalities Office. We are very keen that that spreads throughout Government.

Q164 **Tracy Brabin:** We have had witnesses from, for example, the Fawcett Society who do not believe it is the priority that they would like it to be. How could you demonstrate that it is, in fact, one of your biggest priorities?

Caroline Dinenage: Things will unfold. It is very early days. The single departmental plans that are about to be refreshed within the next few months, one would hope, will encapsulate how this is mainstreamed throughout Government. They will hopefully reassure stakeholders and organisations that do not feel that we are taking this seriously that every aspect of Government does have to take a view on this and pay reference to the goal.

Lord Bates: Following on from that, in these situations there are always points where you have a great crescendo of excitement and anticipation; as the SDGs were announced in 2015, the world took notice and looked forward to their implementation. Then, of course, because they comprised 17 goals and 169 targets and 231 indicators, the machinery of government around the world has to go away and come up with mechanisms by which performance against those measures can be implemented.

We are in that phase now. But we are towards the end of it, because, as Caroline was saying, we are emerging with the single departmental plans and the ONS's work in monitoring. People will increasingly see visibility as to how this is impacting on us. From our point of view, I can certainly say that the Sustainable Development Goals are the lens by which we view everything that we do in the department. Increasingly, that will be seen across Government.

Q165 **Tracy Brabin:** Are you anticipating the leadership coming from the Prime Minister herself in putting this forward?

Lord Bates: When the Prime Minister made her statement about declaring her ambitions for the Sustainable Development Goals, she did not differentiate between internationally and domestically. It was a clear statement, and therefore Ministers and officials have taken note of that,



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and that is the reason why it has been embedded, as Caroline said, in the departmental plans. That is a much better way of doing it, if I may say so. Having seen this a little bit before, sectioning off a matter of this importance into some corner office of the Cabinet Office is the wrong way to do it. The right way to do it is to say, "This has got something to do with absolutely everyone; it is something to do with Government," and to embed it in the SDPs is absolutely the right way to go about it. However, it does take a little longer.

Q166 Tracy Brabin: Regarding the fact that it takes time, how important is it that the Government are seen to be making progress on this internationally?

Lord Bates: It is crucially important that we are seen to be making progress. That is one of the great opportunities that you have afforded to us this morning, through your inquiry and through other similar inquiries by other select committees. This is the opportunity to draw attention to the fact that we are now into the granular detail of how we implement this and how we deliver on it domestically and also internationally.

Caroline Dinanage: It is very healthy, because we know that in some aspects we are world leading, for example the gender pay gap reporting legislation that is about to come out. There are very few places in the world that are that advanced. We know that in certain aspects of the indicators we will have a lot of data and we will be ahead of the world on them. It is very healthy to have a spotlight shone on areas where we may not have so much focus and areas where it is more difficult to collect the data, and have helpful suggestions as to how we move forward on those.

Q167 Tracy Brabin: We have also had a number of witnesses who have said that a lack of Government leadership is partly responsible for poor levels of awareness of SDG 5 and the SDGs more generally across the UK. Would you accept that there are currently low levels of awareness about the fact that the UK has signed up to these goals?

Lord Bates: I probably would have to accept that at the moment, whereas there was quite a high level of awareness towards the end of the millennium development goals as to what they were achieving, because they were delivering concrete results in terms of a reduction of extreme poverty. I would stress that we are at the beginning of the new post-MDGs—the SDGs. I would anticipate that momentum will gather as 2030 closes in on us and people's minds are focused on the ambitious targets that we set ourselves.

Caroline Dinanage: I would agree. We have a long way to go, but these goals are to 2030, so we do have time to make sure that we do everything we can to promote them. Some NGOs have done some really great work on raising awareness. The British Council, the Gender and Development Network and Oxfam all have very big reach with regard to people that follow them and with their websites and what have you.



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There is a lot more we can do, but it is going to be slow and quite self-perpetuating.

Q168 **Tracy Brabin:** Do you think there are any problems attached to this lack of awareness as you are moving forward?

Caroline Dinanage: I do not foresee problems at the moment because we are in the early stages. If we were having this conversation in 2029, of course I would be worried because we would be so much further down the track and would have not raised awareness. With the millennium goals, they were really only fully appreciated almost towards the end, and this will be something that grows in awareness and reach as we progress.

Q169 **Tracy Brabin:** Are there no specific plans for publicity around this?

Caroline Dinanage: You have a document, haven't you?

Lord Bates: There will be. The Government will be producing an agenda 2030, delivering the global goals plan. That will be coming out in the next month or two. That is a cross-departmental response to it. We hope that that will give some publicity. Again, the statistical part of this, which the Committee is right to focus on, will be a key element. Once the data is published, immediately that grabs people's attention. It grabs media attention, civil society attention and political attention in saying, "Hang on, where are you? We seem to be falling behind in respect of this aspect of the goal. What are you going to do to help achieve it?" Therefore, that is one of the reasons why we believe that the statistical element is so critical and it is important to get it right.

Caroline Dinanage: My job before I came into Parliament was in marketing and producing marketing products. In marketing, they say you have to hear something seven times before you remember it. Again, that is so much the case with these sorts of goals and aspirations. For example, there have already been some awareness raising campaigns and particularly targeted at young people, which is really important. For example, during the United Nations General Assembly, DFID's social media channel reached over 2.6 million people. In the promotion of the Girls' Education Forum, digital content reached 1.4 million. We are getting out there and spreading the word but you have to keep talking about something before the penny drops and it becomes part of everyday parlance.

Q170 **Chair:** I just have a supplementary point on that. It is good to hear your personal commitment here, and obviously your Secretary of State, Justine Greening, was instrumental particularly in Sustainable Development Goal 5 even being in place. That is laudable. However, when you look at the fact that 22 countries have already committed to report to the high-level political forum, including countries like Germany, France, Switzerland, China and Turkey, and there are a further 30 who have committed to report this year, why is Britain not putting its money



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where its mouth is and reporting in this way? Why are we holding back when there is such a high level of personal commitment?

Caroline Dinanage: On average, only about six countries can report each year anyway. We have to report at some point over the next 15 years. We have to time when we want to do it.

Q171 **Chair:** Why would you time it later? What is driving that?

Caroline Dinanage: We want to see what comes out of the single departmental plans, when they come out later on in the year. We want to see what comes out of the ONS project and consultation. The Government has put just under £6 million worth of funding into that—£5.8 million. It would be foolish for us to plough on and go and report to the high-level group without that knowledge in our arsenal. However, we do not shy away from reporting. We obviously have to report every few years as part of our CEDAW commitments. We have to report to CEDAW later this summer, and as part of that report we will be making reference to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and how we are implementing it. That is due in July this year, I believe.

Q172 **Chair:** Do you think the mistake by ONS in not including women's organisations in its consultation work has delayed your progress?

Caroline Dinanage: To be honest with you, I was not aware that they had not, but we will look very carefully at this. They clearly know what they are doing. We are world leaders in collecting data, and we also have lots of other sources of data. We are very fortunate to have things like the British Social Attitudes survey and things like the British Crime Survey. We are very good at collecting information, but we need to consolidate that information into a game plan moving forward.

Q173 **Chair:** Were you involved in the delay of the public consultation—

Caroline Dinanage: No.

Q174 **Chair:** You were not involved in that. Was any aspect of Government involved?

Caroline Dinanage: No.

Q175 **Chair:** The SDGs have an international element obviously, Minister Bates, but predominately they are focused on improving lives within the signatory countries and obviously that means domestic policy. How comfortable are you with the fact that the responsibility for the domestic implementation is lying within your department, a department where the levers you pull are much more international than they are domestic?

Lord Bates: That is a very good question and goes to the heart of it. Originally, we have to see the path that we went on. DFID was crucially involved in the negotiations. Justine Greening played a key role in this, alongside David Cameron, in getting the SDGs. It was felt that there was a tremendous amount of network understanding. At a departmental level at that point, and there was also liaison across Whitehall through the



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Whitehall Directors' Group, we had built up an understanding of how we would go about implementing these goals. Therefore, the decision was taken by the then Cabinet Office Minister, Oliver Letwin, in consultation with Cabinet colleagues, that DFID should remain in a leadership role on the policy.

As we have gone on, we have recognised the point you have just made—that really you have two routes. Either DFID tries to be the one that is encouraging all other departments to live up to their obligations or you simply say, "Listen: we make sure that the policy is understood. The Prime Minister has set it out clearly. It is a priority, and then you embed it." That decision to embed it is the one that has changed the dynamic.

DFID is not really a lead department in a traditional sense that you and I would understand across Whitehall. It is more leading the policy area and making sure that it is understood. The co-ordination is done by the Cabinet Office, and the Cabinet Office have their traditional role of scrutinising the single departmental plans to ensure that we are meeting our targets, be they manifesto commitments or SDGs.

Q176 Chair: When it comes down to identifying exactly who is responsible, who is responsible for the fact that we want to make progress on this? Which particular individual, other than the Prime Minister, is responsible?

Lord Bates: The Prime Minister is obviously key in this as leading this. I would say that it would be the Secretary of State who would be responsible within their department for the implementation of the SDGs within their departmental area.

Q177 Chair: Not your Secretary of State.

Lord Bates: Our Secretary of State will play a co-ordinating role in ensuring that people understand what the policy is and what the intention is behind it, because we have that institutional knowledge built up over time. It is the Secretary of State's responsibility to then report to the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office will then assess performance of departments relative to the goals, just in the same way as happens at the moment with manifesto commitments. It is the responsibility of the Secretary of State to deliver on the manifesto commitments. They are co-ordinated—performance against that is co-ordinated and assessed by the Cabinet Office—but responsibility lies there.

Q178 Chair: Which other areas has DFID taken a lead on in terms of domestic policy?

Lord Bates: I am just going to press back, if I may, Chair, on the use of the word "lead", given the explanation that I have given—that it is more policy oversight of the area.

Q179 Chair: In which areas does DFID have policy oversight?

Lord Bates: Areas in which we work cross-departmentally at the present time might be, for example, in the Conflict, Stability and Security



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Fund that we have, where we work with the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence in administering that fund. There is another policy area, which is education. We have a cross-departmental group on education. Of course, there is a very important element in the SDGs on educational attainment. We feed into that. There are mechanisms that exist there for DFID to work cross-departmentally and effectively in delivering Government policies. We would expect this to be similar.

That being said, this is not just another manifesto pledge. I would urge the Committee to understand this. This is not simply saying, "This is another manifesto pledge that was made there, so therefore we know exactly how to go about this across Whitehall." The MDGs did not apply domestically. They were an international set. The SDGs are a major piece of an international commitment, which we are very enthusiastic about. This is new territory that we are working in, probably similar and analogous to the climate change Paris agreement. They are very far-reaching and very substantial, but there is not a set module for how you go about implementing it, and therefore if we look as if we are feeling our way through the process, that is probably exactly what we are doing.

Q180 Chair: You have been very clear. DFID has a very strategic role and brings expertise with it. The Secretaries of State in each department have a responsibility role. However, there has also been identified for us a role for the Cabinet Office. You said you did not want to see this hived off to the Cabinet Office. I am not sure if those were your exact words, but something to that effect. What exactly is the role of the Cabinet Office in terms of the implementation of the SDGs but particularly SDG 5, which is what we are interested in? What has it done so far in that role?

Lord Bates: I should clarify my point on the Cabinet Office, with deep affection for the former Cabinet Office—

Chair: They are wonderful people.

Lord Bates: They are wonderful people. However, you do tend to see quite a lot of name tags appearing on doors down the corridor of new units that have been established to cover a particular initiative. My reference was simply just to make the point that that would be one way in which you would seek to deliver on this. We have gone for a far more ambitious and far-reaching one in embedding it.

Of course, the Cabinet Office has a number of roles in it: there is its normal co-ordination role but it also has the implementation unit. There is also a very important role in terms of the Government Statistical Service feeding the data that is going to feed into the ONS metrics that are produced, which in turn will then feed into the UN metrics on measuring performance. They do have a very important co-ordinating role at the heart of this, as they have with other areas such as manifesto commitments.

Q181 Chair: Is there anything yet that the implementation unit has done that



we should be aware of within the implementation of SDG 5?

Lord Bates: I am not aware of anything particularly on SDG 5, unless Caroline wants to comment on that. More generally, we have been working very closely with them in the preparation of this cross-departmental publication on agenda 2030, which is going to be the starting point for that public engagement with and awareness of what the Government are doing in relation to the SDGs. That is our position paper, if you like. The position paper of agenda 2030 has been consulted across Whitehall with all departments impacted by the goals, and we have heard back from them. It has been amended. It has been in various drafts and it is closing in on signing.

Q182 **Chair:** With regard to the statistical unit within your previous department, are you going to be forwarding them the names and addresses of some women's organisations after having heard that ONS has spent a year without talking to any women's organisations on SDG 5, which Caroline's Secretary of State has been integral in putting into place? It is inexcusable. It is a waste of public money, isn't it?

Lord Bates: It is also very dangerous for people to trespass on other units or organisations as to what they are doing.

Q183 **Chair:** But you are in a co-ordinating role—well, no, a strategic role.

Lord Bates: We are in a co-ordinating role, and certainly if you look at what the Department for International Development does, for instance, then of course we have the civil society partnerships network, and because the issue of women and girls is at the heart of everything that we do—that is our declared policy—the level of consultation we have with civil society in this area is immense. I am sure that that is mirrored particularly in the Government Equalities Office.

Q184 **Chair:** But does the problem we have experienced with ONS not show and demonstrate that somebody needs to take overall ownership of this? I am sure neither of you would have allowed a situation to arise where women's organisations were not being consulted on something so integral to the future policy of this Government relating to the empowerment of women.

Caroline Dinanage: I am sure they will be now.

Q185 **Chair:** I am sure they will be, Caroline. I can count on you, I am sure. Maybe we should just move on to the next line of questioning. Sorry, it is me again. When will you publish the report you promised the International Development Committee in September last year? That was one of the things that we were keen to hear about.

Lord Bates: That is the agenda 2030, the cross-Government plan for implementation. We anticipate that that will be published in March or April. I have got to be very careful. I was going to say "April at the latest", and then I imagined I would get a sharp prod from behind saying, "Do not box us in." However, it is as close as that. We have a draft here



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that has come back from all the departments involved. We are pretty satisfied with it, and so it is just going through the final clearances for agreeing a publication date.

Q186 **Chair:** Is this something we will see on a regular basis or is this a one-off?

Lord Bates: This particular one is a one-off. It is setting our position as to how we are going to go about it cross-departmentally. This will be our position paper. Again, because we are into new ground, nobody has written a script that says that you can only do this once in 15 years or that you need to do it once every five years. We can see what the need is and what the interest is and follow up on it.

Q187 **Chair:** What do you expect the report to cover, given that it is breaking new ground?

Lord Bates: The report will go through goal by goal and identify the areas that we are going to focus on. It will approach it in two ways on each goal. It will simply say, "This is what we are going to do around the world," because DFID, the FCO and others do a tremendous amount of work in this area around the world. Then it will say, "This is what it means domestically, and this is how we are going to go about it domestically." It will contain two elements to each goal: the international and the domestic.

Q188 **Chair:** Will it include information about how that is reflected in individual departmental plans?

Lord Bates: I do not think it goes quite that far down to that level of detail. It needs to be seen as the platform that sets out the cross-Government approach, and then the single departmental plans will go down to the granular level of detail with each of the indicators that are set about how we are going to go about implementing them and measuring them.

Q189 **Chair:** When will we see the individual departmental plan updates?

Lord Bates: The departmental plans currently run for a period of five years, from 2015 to 2020 in the spending review round. They are published on the internet. The decision was taken in December that there was going to be a refresh on that. We are expecting the refresh to come out in April.

Q190 **Chair:** That is around the same time as your report.

Lord Bates: Yes. In a way that you might be surprised but perhaps encouraged to see, there was a general co-ordination here of efforts that we are trying to achieve.

Q191 **Chair:** Of the countries that have already produced their reports to the high-level political forum, which country do you think has done the best job of expressing its commitments in this area already?



Lord Bates: We discuss this quite often. It is noticeable. I was hosting the meeting of the Nordic Plus development ministers this week. We discussed how we were going to go about the different plans. There, there has been a mixture of approaches. Some have taken it to say that there is an SDG approach, so there is a unit within their development agency that is particularly looking at this and taking responsibility for it. Some have gone for a cross-departmental approach. Often, they have divided responsibility in countries between the finance ministry, which is responsible for all of the domestic implementation, and the foreign ministry, which is responsible for implementation of the international agenda.

They are all different and they are all learning from each other at the present time. We are not aware that anyone has broken from the field and established thought leadership in this area. If we did hear of somebody, we would be in contact with them to find out more about how they are doing it.

Q192 **Chair:** Could the Committee expect that the findings from our inquiry might still be able to influence what you are doing?

Lord Bates: Absolutely. It is a very timely approach. Already some of the work that Caroline referred to earlier that has been generated through this inquiry is work already in reports from Plan International UK and the British Council et cetera. It has been very helpful to us.

Q193 **Jess Phillips:** I will go back to the issue of a lack of voice for women's organisations. We have heard from many women's organisations during this inquiry that they feel that the opportunities to have their voices heard by Government have been lost in recent years. Caroline, what is your response to that, and what more could GEO do to engage with women's organisations?

Caroline Dinenge: I am really disappointed to hear that they feel that way, because I feel that we really do go out of our way to really speak to a cross-section of different women's organisations—and not always the ones that you would think. We do have our NGO conference in November, which this year is focused very much on SDG 5 particularly. We have 100, mostly women-related NGOs from across the UK come and spend a whole day. That is very valuable. We often have other smaller meetings in the run up to our CEDAW evidence.

One of the difficulties of the GEO is that we are so tiny. We only have 50 staff, but that is also one of the things that makes us more nimble and agile. For example, two weeks ago I had a group of ladies from an organisation called QED. I do not know if you have met her before, but an incredible lady called Adeeba Malik came down from Bradford with a group of non-English speaking women from her area, most of whom were originally from Pakistan. This organisation teaches English to these ladies. It is a real community engagement programme. It is so valuable and she brought a group of these women with her. For me, as a Minister, it was



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really fascinating to speak to them about their individual experiences. One of them had lived here for nearly 50 years before she decided to engage in learning English. The reason was that she was widowed and her sons were grown up. She needed to go to medical appointments and an eye test, and she did not have the English to engage. She did not want her sons to keep taking time off work to go with her. She was just so inspiring and lovely.

We no longer have great, big set pieces like the Women's National Commission. It was a big organisation. It was set up during the Wilson Government. We did not have social media or all of the outreaches that we have now. It had 12 staff.

Q194 **Jess Phillips:** The response of the women's organisations to this Committee was that the loss of the Women's National Commission had been a loss. To pick up the issue of the big NGO conference, what was reported to this Committee was that that was a conference from 11.30 am until 4.00 pm and it only had a 45-minute breakout session consultation for them to speak. The rest of the time it was the Government speaking to them. Every single women's group that has come in front of us has said that they do not feel that they have an avenue into moulding anything to do with SDG 5, at the moment. I realise it is early days.

Caroline Dinanage: That is very valuable feedback, Jess. As you know, I will always take that on board and it is very helpful to look at how we do our conferences moving forward, to make sure there is much more opportunity for feedback. Of course, because we are such a little team, our team is there in the coffees and the lunches and they are chatting to everybody. The feedback does not just come in in an official roundtable or writing on a Post-it note type way.

The Women's National Commission was very much of its time; it was very valuable back in the days of the 1960s and 1970s, when female economic empowerment was really quite recent in this country. These days, we have so many more ways of reaching out to really marginalised groups around the UK. Our team is looking at how we really maximise the use of things like social media, how we can really get to the voices of women from all different age ranges and how we speak to everything from Girlguiding UK to Mumsnet to the WI. We are looking at really reaching out to little groups like the one that I have mentioned.

Recently I have been doing a bit of work on the issue of body image and particularly these really skinny, unhealthy models. Through my department we were able to have a roundtable with a group of about 12 to 15 young people who are in the modelling industry right now. Through the Women's National Commission, their voices would not have been heard, yet I could have a one-to-one meeting with these women, who gave me the most powerful evidence about some of the issues we have within the fashion industry at the moment.



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That is where the future lies. It is about being able to have those very agile conversations about issues that we are really concerned about. As the ONS data moves forward, we will be able to shine a light on specific areas where we do not think we have that focus.

- Q195 **Jess Phillips:** I understand why it is important to be agile and make sure that it is not just the same old voices; I can totally recognise that. With regard to the model of engagement with women's organisations that the SDG goals demand in partnership working, do you think that there is currently a structure suitable to do that? I recognise that CEDAW criticised the UK in 2013 for a lack of such a structure. We have heard evidence from the Scottish Government, and there seemed to be much more structure around how this was happening in Scotland. Would you commit to trying to set up a similar structure for women's organisations in England?

Caroline Dinenage: I am not going to recreate big, unwieldy, formal mechanisms. As I say, the Women's National Commission was of its time. But by the time it ended there were 12 staff.

- Q196 **Jess Phillips:** I am not saying we should go back to the commission, but should there be some kind of formalised structure so that they know the rules of the game and how they can be involved in SDG 5?

Caroline Dinenage: I certainly take on board your feedback. I will look with much interest at what the Women and Equalities Select Committee recommends. You know I always do. I am always very interested in what you guys have to say and any suggestions that you have on how we can better engage. I am not in the business of creating big, unwieldy organisations where we speak to the same people over and over again. I am looking at ways that we can reach the really hard-to-reach groups, like the one I spoke about in Bradford, and others up and down the country, from the most rural communities to the most isolated, urban communities.

- Q197 **Jess Phillips:** As somebody who worked for a small and localised women's organisation and for a large and national women's organisation, that fear comes from the fact that resources mean that small organisations do not have the capacity in any way to even be delivering their core business at the moment, let alone dealing with the echelons of CEDAW and this, that and the other. That was definitely what we heard from the organisations that came in front of us. We heard that lack of funding at the moment for people to carry out their core business means that it is almost impossible for women's organisations to be involved in this. Do you accept that is an issue at the moment?

Caroline Dinenage: Everybody has to be really careful how we spend money at the moment. Everybody has got tightened budgets—every Government department up and down the country as well as every business up and down the country. They have all tightened their belts, and obviously it is a concern. This is why we have to be really imaginative



about how we consult. We have to use things like social media. There is no point in hoicking people up to London so we can ask them what they think. We have to be doing much more outreach work rather than having set roundtable meetings in five different cities around the UK. There are much better ways of using our small resources and other people's valuable time and resources.

In the same way, with the way we target our money, I would much rather use our money finding out what works in order to achieve our goals and then putting in place policies that get there. This would be preferable to having nice meetings with lots of tea and coffee where everybody tells me what they think, and then we come away largely knowing what we knew before but with still no way of solving the problem.

Q198 Jess Phillips: With the "no one left behind" element of all of the goals, there is a real argument that the Government cannot in the same way do the work done by the women's groups that work with refugee women, Gypsy and Roma women. Their being able to function is quite important for our achieving our "no one left behind" element of SDG 5. What more do you think that GEO or DFID or whichever department is in charge can do to make sure that they are able to feed into this process and also develop the strategies for outcomes in the future?

Caroline Dinelage: I agree with you that there are some really tiny organisations doing mammoth work with some really vulnerable groups of women. We have to put our thinking caps on to think how we best get their views and opinions. They might not be the sorts of organisations that would schlep all the way up to London for a conference, because what they are doing on the ground is so demanding and their resources are limited. That is why we have to be very imaginative in how we consult with people. The use of digital forms of communication and social media is so valuable.

Lord Bates: From an international perspective, you are right to point to the "no one left behind" agenda, which was one of the five transformational shifts identified by the high-level panel and was the precursor to the goal. That is a very important element that then runs through the goals that we have. You also touched upon a very important one, which was to use the goals themselves, because one of the goals that we are going to have to demonstrate progress on is goal 17, which is on global partnerships and partnership working to deliver the goal. In a sense, it is a great opportunity for civil society. When the IDC undertook their report into Sustainable Development Goals, they paid tribute to the work of civil society organisations in the formulation of the SDGs through the UN Economic and Social Council and they paid tribute to the work that had been done.

Now the goals are there, I would encourage organisations such as the ones that you have mentioned to hold the Government to account, which I am sure they will, but through the Sustainable Development Goals by



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asking, "Where are these being met?", "How is this being met through the single departmental plan?" and "How is it going to be delivered when the statistics are published?" There is a great opportunity for civil society organisations and women's organisations in particular in relation to SDG 5, but of course not only SDG 5—they are at the heart of SDG 3, 4 and probably all of them to a degree—to really hold Government to account as to where we are going with those.

That is the only thing that I would add, if that is helpful.

Chair: Gavin has a quick supplementary question before we move on.

Q199 **Mr Shuker:** The argument is that DFID is investing heavily in national organisations that help local, difficult-to-reach groups in order for their voices to be heard at governmental level but, over the last few years in the UK, we have run down our capacity to do that. Can either of you answer why that is?

Lord Bates: It is widely recognised that the UK Government have played a very strong role in Europe putting forward the agenda of women and girls on the international stage. In fact, a number of the goals that we secured, whether it be on forced marriage, FGM, access to education or sexual reproductive health—which came up against real opposition—involved tremendous effort from the Government working internationally and with civil society to bring about those changes. We have shown leadership.

The point we were making before is that the SDGs apply not only internationally but equally domestically, and that is what makes them unique and different from the MDGs, and therefore we have to ensure that we meet all of those obligations at a national level as we meet them and advance them at an international level. You will see a step change going forward.

Caroline Dinanage: I would not necessarily agree that we are listening any less than we did in the last two or three years. Every week in my role in the Government Equalities Office I meet with different groups such as women's organisations or organisations that are involved in promoting the interests of people from lesbian, gay, bi and trans communities, and that involves going out and about and them coming to see me. That is what my team is all about. We are about listening. Just because we are not standing in Trafalgar Square with a big sign on our heads saying "I'm listening" does not mean that we are not very agile in the way that we are communicating.

Q200 **Mr Shuker:** With respect, Minister, no one is doubting your personal commitment to hearing from different groups—and we are saying the opposite. We have a concern not that you are not standing in Trafalgar Square trying to do this job yourself but in terms of asking about the structural routes that allow particularly hard-to-reach groups of women to get their voices heard and policy changed at a governmental level. We



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are suggesting that, while DFID has heavily invested in this overseas, in the UK we have really reduced our structural capacity to do that.

Caroline Dinanage: I always value feedback from this Committee and, if you can come up with strong suggestions as to how we engage better, I will always take that into consideration.

Q201 **Mrs Drummond:** We are moving from civil society to businesses now. It has been very clear in some of the evidence that the SDGs are conspicuous by their absence in businesses, including on the British Chambers of Commerce website, where there is nothing about SDGs at all. I want to know what you are going to do to make UK businesses more aware of their role of implementing SDGs and SDG 5 in particular.

Caroline Dinanage: This is really important because, as you know, my boss, Justine Greening, was in DFID when the SDGs were agreed, and she chairs one of the seven working groups—the one on changing business practices. There was a meeting last month with representatives from top businesses around the UK on exactly this issue. We are in early days, but what is positive is that, in the Government Equalities Office, we already have really strong links with business. We started the Women's Business Council, the tentacles of which go out to businesses around the UK. We have all the links through the work of the Hampton-Alexander review—the work on women on boards—and we have very good relationships with loads of different women's business organisations such as the 30% Club and various others.

You are right to point out that this is not on websites currently but, as I say, these are early days and it is very much in our sights.

Q202 **Mrs Drummond:** In Germany, they often look very favourably on companies that are incorporating the SDGs, for instance in procurement. Is there any evidence that you will be looking favourably on companies that have already adopted the SDGs for Government contracts?

Caroline Dinanage: That is very much the sort of thing that will come out of the high-level panel that Justine chairs. These are all the sorts of themes that group will be looking at.

Mrs Drummond: That might be considered one of the incentives to try to get businesses on board.

Q203 **Chair:** Is it one of the things that you are going to do in the UK? Obviously, that is at an international level.

Caroline Dinanage: The panel has representatives from some of the biggest UK business on it, and we are doing this thing where we take advice from business about the best way to communicate with businesses—a novel idea for Government—where we do not think we know best. We are at a listening phase at the moment, where we are really trying to scope the best way forward with this.

Q204 **Mrs Drummond:** The Scottish Government has already started doing



this, so there may be some examples up there to look at. We are really interested in finding out what sort of mechanisms you will use, whether it is tenders, sustainability codes, business pledges and that sort of thing. When is this report going to be published?

Caroline Dinéage: As I say, it is early days. The panel had a meeting last month and they are plotting their way forward at the moment, not with a view to publishing a particular report but with a view to recommendations about how we move forward in a way that will best engage business.

Q205 **Mrs Drummond:** Right. A strategy is going to come forward.

Caroline Dinéage: Yes.

Mrs Drummond: Do you have anything else to add?

Lord Bates: At the international level there is the higher level panel, which Justine Greening was a founding member of, on women's economic empowerment, and that has been a powerful voice in this area.

I also recognise that we cannot deliver a lot of the SDGs internationally without working in partnership with the business sector. I was very involved, when I was at the Home Office, in the modern slavery legislation that went through, and I know how important it is in tackling, for example, abuse that occurs within the supply chain. It is absolutely critical that business organisations, as part of the problem, must be part of the solutions. As we look internationally at eradicating poverty, DFID published its economic development plan—the Secretary of State, Priti Patel, published that last week—and that has a very strong partnership with business and trade in terms of how UK business can be at the heart of eradicating poverty and delivering our international agenda under the SDGs. These are all overlapping areas.

Q206 **Lucy Allan:** Moving on to the single departmental plans, Minister Dinéage, which elements of SDG 5 will be included in the revised and refreshed departmental plan?

Caroline Dinéage: As you know, the Government Equalities Office is not a standalone Government department; we are within the Department for Education. Some of the specific elements of goal 5 that are for the GEO would be: ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere; ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership; adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality; and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels. That will be very much part of what we are looking at in the GEO, but our single plan will be published as part of the DfE, which will include parts of goal 4—education and lifelong learning—as well as the gender equality parts of goal 5.

Q207 **Lucy Allan:** Is the "no one left behind" principle, which is obviously very key to SDG 5, going to be incorporated within your single departmental



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plan?

Caroline Dinanage: I would hope it would and, in addition to that, we are looking at how we can do more through the Department for Education to tackle some of the individual concerns such as FGM, forced marriage and early marriage. We are looking at how we can implement some of the legislation that already exists, such as the FGM protection orders and forced marriage protection orders, at the earliest level through the Department for Education. Through the DfE, we have girls right from a very young age, and we need to make sure that we are doing as much as we can to protect them as they go through our schools.

Q208 **Lucy Allan:** We have talked a lot today about civil society and engagement and all of that but, in terms of this refreshed plan, can you tell us a little bit about how we are going to ensure that we have had consultation with stakeholders and that they are involved in the publishing of the new revised plan?

Caroline Dinanage: The single department plan is something that the Department for Education is working up at the moment—we had our departmental board meeting yesterday—and that will be done by the Secretary of State in partnership with the Permanent Secretary. All the different department heads will feed into that and will all have to make reference to the parts of the goals that they feel are relevant to their own different departments, and presumably will have to do any consultation that they feel is necessary in order to answer those questions. The Cabinet Office will be looking at every single departmental plan and disseminating that information.

Q209 **Lucy Allan:** What I am hearing is that this is the Department for Education's departmental plan. There is not really a sense that it has buy-in or full commitment from your department.

Caroline Dinanage: My department is part of the Department for Education.

Lucy Allan: Yes, I mean just in terms of the ministerial position.

Caroline Dinanage: We are part of the DfE in the sense that, when the plan comes out, it will not be a GEO plan; it will be a DfE plan.

Q210 **Lucy Allan:** Will that create a problem in terms of making sure that there is commitment to SDG 5 and that the revised plan is going to reflect that?

Caroline Dinanage: Every different Government department has certain aspects of SDG 5 that will be relevant to them. For example, the Department of Health will have aspects that are relevant to them, and they will have to report back in their single departmental plan about that. There are aspects that lie squarely with the Government Equalities Office, which, of course, we will report on. There are broader aspects that lie across the whole of DfE that will also come together for our single departmental plan. However, of course, the GEO's role really is liaising



with other Government departments in the implementation of SDG 5 in particular and being available to support and advise other Government departments on that particular aspect of it and how we do all the gender equality aspects.

Q211 Lucy Allan: Things like valuing unpaid care and promoting shared responsibility within the household are coming within the single departmental plan. Is that going to be something that could be seen in the refreshed plan?

Caroline Dinénage: I am not sure whether that will come under the Department for Education refreshed plan. We all have bits that we own and naturally sit with us. Within that, under that banner, where there are aspects that bite with any given Government department's range of portfolios and responsibilities and powers, that is where they will then have to report back as part of all the different indicators.

Lord Bates: It might be helpful to add to that, of course, that each of the indicators will have to have departmental ownership. Someone will have to own it. All the indicators will be there and they will all be owned by someone. The point that Caroline mentioned about the departmental board meeting is a very important one because, at every departmental board, almost the first item of business is a list of all the targets, obligations and indicators that have been made through the manifesto—and soon to include the SDGs—and where they are in terms of a green, amber or red performance against that target. It will be top of mind. Each of those indicators will be owned by a department and each departmental organisation will meet and be very much focused on delivering those indicators. We can expect that to drive quite a lot of activity and suggestions as to how we make better progress if we are falling behind.

Q212 Lucy Allan: In terms of measuring the progress made, what indicators would be used, for example, for that target that was just mentioned: the unpaid care and promoting shared responsibility? What indicators would be used to measure that?

Lord Bates: There is a breakdown of the indicators and, in fact, I confess that I am using here a written submission by the Office for National Statistics to your inquiry as a basis for doing that. There are 231 indicators at the present time, but reference was also made to the fact that a very important organisation in the monitoring of this is the UN Statistical Commission. The UN Statistical Commission basically sets out how the Sustainable Development Goals will be measured and sets out what the indicators are. They are informed by an interagency expert panel. Forgive me for using all of these names, but it might be useful for your report to have that there. The expert panel have produced an additional report—which might suggest there has been some virtue in us being, under UNSD, a little bit slower in identifying which indicators we follow—which is going to be discussed between 7 and 10 March at the UN in New York, regarding expanding the number of indicators. They will set the indicators.



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We are then required, as one of 193 signatories, to regularly update and populate the data field relating to that particular indicator. The information for that will be generated by the departments through the single departmental plan, which will be informed by data from the ONS, supplied by the Government Statistical Service as well as the Implementation Unit.

In a sense, that is how it will all feed out, but the dominant set of indicators will be the one set by the UN Statistical Commission, because they are the ones that will be charged by the UN with upholding and monitoring the progress towards the SDGs.

Q213 Lucy Allan: This Committee has heard quite a bit of evidence about access to abortion in Northern Ireland, and there has been concern about whether the UK can make progress on SDG 5 if this is not addressed. We would like to have some sort of reassurance that SDG 5—the target to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights—is going to be included within a single departmental plan. Is that something that you can give us an assurance on today?

Caroline Dinanage: You are right to raise that as an issue. That was also raised by CEDAW, in our last report to CEDAW, as one of their concerns as well. That obviously is a devolved issue for the Northern Ireland Government, so that will obviously need to be tackled. I do not think it will necessary be something that would fall under the Government Equalities Office, but somebody will need to take ownership of issues such as that.

Q214 Lucy Allan: Could that be within the Department of Health's plan?

Caroline Dinanage: It could be but, because of the devolution, I would have to come back to you on that. Because of the devolved nature of that, there are certain aspects of devolved policy whereby the levers that we have here are limited, and so I might have to come back to you with a little bit more information about who would have to take responsibility for those concerns.

Q215 Lucy Allan: We would be very keen to make sure that universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is not falling out of some department's plan.

Caroline Dinanage: As a general theme, that will come under the Department of Health but, with respect to the specific situation in Northern Ireland, we would have to look more carefully at how that is reported on.

Q216 Chair: Could I press you on that? Obviously the UK signed up to the SDGs as the UK—the United Kingdom.

Caroline Dinanage: Yes.

Chair: How do the Government envisage tackling devolved issues? It must have been something that was thought about because otherwise we



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would not have been able to sign up to this, because it is a UK commitment.

Caroline Dinénage: That is a very good question. Clearly there is a framework for communicating between the various devolved Administrations and plotting a course forward but, where there are particularly thorny issues such as this—and this is a big ticket item that, as I recall, CEDAW particularly raised as one of two significant issues from our last report—we need to think very carefully about how we move forward on it. I would probably have to come back to you with more thoughts about how that would pan out, because neither health policy nor Northern Ireland policy comes under my area of responsibility.

Q217 **Chair:** Would you be able to write to the Committee on that? Obviously it has implications for other aspects of the SDGs and, if you are saying that it does not apply to certain parts of the UK—

Caroline Dinénage: No, I was not saying that, but how different parts of the UK fulfil their responsibilities is clearly a matter that needs to be discussed further.

Chair: It is pretty clear that universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is not consistent with the current policy.

Caroline Dinénage: I would agree.

Chair: Gavin, did you want to ask a supplementary question?

Q218 **Mr Shuker:** You covered my point, although I would just ask this: is it your understanding that the devolved Administrations, in whichever form they take, have an equal responsibility to deliver on the commitments that the UK Government have made?

Caroline Dinénage: Yes, that is my understanding.

Q219 **Chair:** I have a couple of other supplementary questions before we come on to Gavin's final set of questions. I am still confused about how the process works. For instance, when the single departmental plans are developed and people decide which parts of the SDGs they are going to cover, if there is an inadequacy there in terms of who is doing what and some areas of the SDGs are not covered—and I know we are focused today on SDG 5 but it applies here as well—who is going to decide that? Which individual is going to look at the single departmental plans and say, "We have not got a coherent response through Government"? Who does that?

Lord Bates: That would be the Department for International Development in its policy overview role. If there is an indicator that we are falling behind on, a target we are not meeting or a goal that is inadequately covered, we would spot that and, in our policy overview role, highlight it. However, we would highlight it in partnership with the Cabinet Office to the department for it to take action rather than necessarily stipulating what that action should be.



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Q220 **Chair:** In advance of the refresh of the single departmental plans, are you teeing up certain departments to make sure that they will be covering particularly SDG 5 and the aspects of that?

Lord Bates: Yes, that is a significant body of work that is ongoing at the present time and has been ongoing at a director level as well as at ministerial level across Government, seeking to prepare this agenda 2030 document position paper, which I was referring to earlier.

Q221 **Chair:** Going particularly into the issue that Lucy raised around valuing unpaid care, which is an explicit part of SDG 5, which department will be responsible for that if it is not GEO?

Lord Bates: I cannot give you an answer on that at the moment. I apologise for that. That will, of course, have to be covered in the single departmental plans but will also be covered in our approach in the agenda 2030 document, once that is finally published. What I am trying to say is that it is not that we have not given thought to it; it is just that I am not in a position where I can give an answer to that at this present time.

Q222 **Chair:** Do you accept that it is a central issue?

Lord Bates: Yes, absolutely; it is an indicator that needs to be monitored and that policies need to address.

Q223 **Chair:** Have you yet identified the indicators that you will use to measure progress?

Caroline Dinanage: Yes, the ONS have highlighted them in what they call 5(4)(1). One of the pieces of information that they will be collecting as part of the indicators will be the percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work broken down by sex, age group and location.

Chair: Brilliant, thank you.

Q224 **Mr Shuker:** What data will you disaggregate in your monitoring of SDG 5?

Caroline Dinanage: In what sense?

Mr Shuker: In the sense of disaggregation conceptually around looking at the different protected characteristics.

Caroline Dinanage: We have already collected an enormous amount of data, which completely ties in with some of our responsibilities under SDG 5. For example, we are quite ahead of the world with the information that we have on things like the gender pay gap, and that information will only be increased when the gender pay gap legislation comes into force from 1 April. Companies across the UK will have to have that sort of information, and that sort of data will be very useful when we are looking specifically at certain parts of the goals.

Q225 **Mr Shuker:** That is a good example. The gender pay gap obviously is



one measure that allows us to monitor our progress. However, as I understand it, the central thrust behind the UK's negotiating position around the global goals was "to leave no one behind". In order to do that, presumably you need to take an indicator such as the gender pay gap and look at how it affects different groups based on their protected characteristics such as race, religion, orientation, whether they are from a marginalised community and so on.

Caroline Dinanage: The Government Equalities Office's role only covers women and people from LGBT communities, so it will be up to different Government departments to decide whether they want to do something similar with regard to race, for example.

Q226 **Mr Shuker:** Let me have another go at that then: what data will you disaggregate in your monitoring of SDG 5?

Lord Bates: I can certainly help with the overview of that. Given the nature of the SDGs, one of the big discussions that took place in agreeing them was how we were going to get the data to monitor them. The obvious point was that you needed pretty detailed disaggregated data by gender, race, age and geographical location. It was very specific in terms of what you needed to do. That is part of the remit that we have brought home from the UN SDGs, and we have to look at how that can be achieved. As I understand it, that will be a significant part of what the ONS will be consulting on.

Q227 **Mr Shuker:** Is it your commitment that you will disaggregate the indicators by, as I think you said, age, location—

Lord Bates: There is a longer list than that, in fact, but basically the UN Statistical Commission—sorry to keep coming back to this—has set the rules, and so we just need to find a way of implementing them. Even a very sophisticated body like the ONS is finding it very difficult to disaggregate some of them to the level required. Nonetheless, the bar has been set and we need to attain that or be held accountable for not doing so.

Q228 **Mr Shuker:** It may be that the answer you need to give me is "we do not know yet" or "we have not got a final answer on that" or "we have not concluded". But do you believe that you will be able to disaggregate the indicators based on protected characteristics under existing UK legislation?

Lord Bates: I cannot see how you could possibly claim that you have met the SDG targets if you did not disaggregate. However, it will be a challenge. In order to do it, we have to find a way of overcoming that challenge.

Q229 **Mr Shuker:** That is helpful. Do you agree that one of the ways in which you will inevitably end up collecting and collating this data that you require to show progress on SDG 5 will be through requiring civil society organisations to assist you?



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Lord Bates: Yes. They provide a great deal of data, which we will draw upon. The exact mechanism of that feeds into an earlier question that I know was asked. I do not want to be too precise on it, but I think you will draw from all statistically validated authoritative sources and publicly available sources that you can in meeting this challenge. It is a huge statistical challenge—one of the biggest that we have ever faced as a Government.

Caroline Dinanage: There are some indicators that still have not been decided. We are still waiting on information on more.

Lord Bates: That was my point. If the view of the Statistical Commission, when they meet in New York in a month's time, is that they want to add in and refine these additional indicators, we have to make the changes, because they are the standard-setting body.

Q230 **Mr Shuker:** Do you envisage that you will need to put in place some funding to allow for the collection of this data, not just through existing governmental organisations but through civic society as well?

Caroline Dinanage: The ONS has been given just under £6 million to collect the data under the indicators that we currently have, and obviously we will have to take a view once that piece of work and their consultation is completed.

Lord Bates: Their cash flow as to how that £5.8 million is allocated over the spending period is instructive of the challenge because, in the current year, for example, it was about £600,000, but then it rises very sharply as we get into 2018-19 and 2019-20 to in excess of £2 million per annum. That reflects the fact that that is when they will have to do the significant amount of outreach to populate the fields in the data set.

Q231 **Chair:** Would you expect ONS to be working with civil society to make sure that their data is robust?

Lord Bates: That is a very precise question. Do you mind if I address it in a slightly different way? I would expect them to draw on all sources. The challenge is going to be at such a level that it will require them to draw on all statistically significant sources and authoritative sources publicly available in order to show and demonstrate progress.

Q232 **Chair:** Will that be funded from within the £6 million that you have allocated to this project?

Lord Bates: Yes, that will be funded from within the existing spending review settlement. That is the anticipation that we have gone through. But these are changes, and my hesitation, which I apologise for, is simply because I am aware that this is a moving field, not just in terms of the indicators that you are measuring but in terms of the ambition that we have to be able to disaggregate the data to the level required, which, in many areas, has never been done before. Therefore, to be able to say with surety that we will be able to do it and within this spending envelope



is probably something that, if I were to give a straightforward answer to it, would come back to haunt me in front of your Committee for years to come.

Q233 Mr Shuker: It is really helpful to understand that you view the total envelope of spend around working up how the mechanisms will work for capturing this data to be that £6 million figure that you have talked about there. How realistic is that sum when you have an agenda that is about leaving no marginalised group behind and where we know, and you have accepted, that civil society in particular will provide some of the answer as to how you are going to get that quite fine-level data, based on the commitment you have already given this Committee around disaggregation? Many civic society organisations, as you have already said, struggle sometimes to have the resources to be able to do this work.

Caroline Dinanage: You have to remember that we are starting from a position of greater advantage than almost all of our international colleagues and friends. We already have an enormous amount of data. We already do a lot of surveying. We have our things like the British Crime Survey and our national attitudes set. We already collect vast amounts of information, so we are at a positive starting point. Clearly we need to go further, but I do not think that is a particularly gloomy prospect, because we are already very good at this stuff.

Q234 Mr Shuker: Lastly, will you look at funding the Gender Statistics Users' Group to do any of this work?

Caroline Dinanage: Not that I am aware of. That would be a decision for the ONS.

Lord Bates: That would come through the consultation with the ONS, and I will put it forward. I would certainly encourage, through you, Chair, the civil society organisations and women's groups that are very much interested and concerned in the process to take the opportunity in that consultation to show their level of expertise and where they have data that could be helpful to compute those numbers that we are looking for.

Chair: Wonderful. Thank you so much for what was a very closely questioned session. You have responded to our questions. There are a few areas on which I think you are going to write back to us. We will be pulling our report together as swiftly as we are able to. We are very grateful for the fact that you will look closely at our findings and we hope that they will influence your way forward in this important area. Thank you very much.