



# International Development Committee

## Oral evidence: DFID's priorities 2018, HC 726

Wednesday 31 January 2018

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Richard Burden; James Duddridge; Mr Nigel Evans; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Mr Ivan Lewis; Lloyd Russell-Moyle; Paul Scully; Mr Virendra Sharma; Henry Smith.

Questions 1 - 51

### Witnesses

I: Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP, Secretary of State, Department for International Development; Matthew Rycroft CBE, Permanent Secretary, Department for International Development.



## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP and Matthew Rycroft CBE.

Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon. Can I welcome very warmly the Secretary of State and the Permanent Secretary? We have a 90-minute session, one and a half hours, to cover a broad range of areas. In both cases, it is your first opportunity with us, so you are very welcome. Can I ask each of you what your main priorities are for DFID going forward?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. With your permission, I will just make a brief opening statement, which will help set some of the context. First of all, I would like to thank the Committee for your warm welcome, not just today but on my appointment. I look forward to many such sessions, hopefully, including some more informal ones, which I am very grateful for. We have a very constructive relationship and I am very grateful for that, and I hope that will continue. I feel tremendous pride in having been appointed to this post and at such a critical time for Britain and our place in the world.

I am very fortunate to have a good team: my Ministers and parliamentary colleagues from across the House, who have great interest and expertise in this area. I am delighted at the appointment of our new Permanent Secretary, who I think is going to do an incredible job and bring his incredible expertise and experience to DFID. I would also just place on record my thanks to Nick Dyer for not just my induction, but also having steered the Department through some quite difficult times.

It is an exceptional Department. It is outward-looking and sophisticated in how it uses partnerships and social finance, all the things that I have been wanting to see from previous Departments. In the 76 days that I have been in office, I have been methodically working through what the Department does, what it does well, where it needs to improve and identifying the challenges and opportunities of the future. How precisely can these strategic development goals actually be delivered? I have listened a great deal to economists, philosophers, my opposite numbers in other nations, our staff in the UK and in country, partners, suppliers, volunteers, but also critically the recipients of our aid, refugees and economic migrants, business, entrepreneurs, tech designers, Whitehall, town hall and the general public too.

I have also travelled to areas where we are facing some of the most pressing humanitarian crises, in particular the Caribbean, the plight of the Rohingya, securing the access to Hodeidah and insecurity in East Africa. I have arrived at some strategic objectives and priorities. Unfortunately for the Committee I have not announced those yet. I apologise for that, but what I have done is set out some principles under which I will operate, particularly with regard to our spend. I have also tried to bring a more operational drumbeat to DFID, enabling a greater real-time ministerial oversight, particularly in those humanitarian situations.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

I passionately believe in aid. I believe that the quality of that aid should not be measured in how good it makes us feel, but in the good that it does. We have a moral obligation to do the most good we can with our resource, which for me means a shift in our thinking. It means a shift in gear and it also means a shift in the offer we want to make. As well as devising that new development offer, I have managed to secure some things in my 76 days, one of which is on disability, in not just the summit, but getting the World Bank to set stretch targets and agree to collect data. I have also set up a new unit particularly focused on revenue collection and enabling nations to build their tax systems to fund public service.

I am very aware that whatever I manage to achieve in post it will be upstaged by my Department. Just to mention one area, in the same timeframe, DFID has managed to stop an outbreak of the black death in Madagascar. It was our phenomenal preparedness, swift response and expertise that has literally saved thousands of lives and averted a catastrophe. For that heroic action—and it is heroic—I want every British citizen to feel real pride. A necessary condition of that is that I, as the Secretary of State, never forget whose money it is that I am spending. The British people ultimately enable that heroic action and compassion.

**Q2 Chair:** Can I thank you for that opening statement, Secretary of State? We will be returning to a number of the issues that you have referred to, during the questioning. Can I just ask two very short supplementaries? Your predecessor recommitted the Government to the 0.7% target. Are you able to do the same?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Yes, absolutely.

**Q3 Chair:** She also recommitted to DFID as a standalone Department. Does that remain?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Absolutely, yes.

**Chair:** Thank you. Permanent Secretary.

**Matthew Rycroft:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair. Thank you, members. I want to begin by thanking my predecessors. Sir Mark Lowcock has handed over a well run and well organised Department. As the Secretary of State said, Nick Dyer ran the Department for seven months with what turned out to be an election, a new Secretary of State and, most recently, the very tragic death of our DFID colleague, Becky Dykes, in Beirut.

My job is to make sure that DFID has the capability to deliver the Secretary of State's principles, vision and objectives. My initial impression is that we do have that and will continue to have that. My view from New York, where I was previously based, of DFID was extremely positive. The 0.7% commitment that you have referred to, Mr Chairman, puts the United Kingdom at the top of the league of international donors. We are a donor that others want to follow, and we



have used that position of standing to shape the global goals—the sustainable development goals—among many other things.

Back here, I look forward to working with all of the staff in DFID to further that reputation. My initial contacts with all of them, both here in London and at our joint headquarters in Scotland, have confirmed my impression from New York, which is that DFID staff are highly professional, engaged, motivated and extremely good at their jobs. DFID as a Department in Whitehall has a reputation, quite rightly, as strong on ensuring value for money, strong on using data and evidence in policy-making, and good at project and programme management. When you look at our results, they are impressive.

There are a few recent highlights. Working with others, we prevented famine in Somalia last year. We stopped Ebola from spreading in West Africa. We set the standard for how to reform the multilateral system. We introduced cash transfers for those in most urgent need in humanitarian emergencies. We negotiated compacts with Governments like those in Jordan and Ethiopia. All of that has been underpinned by a sharp focus on ensuring value for money for the British taxpayer.

Like the Secretary of State, I believe in aid, I believe in development and I believe that aid and development need to be seen as central to our interests as a country and the mutual interests of the countries around the world that we are working with. We need development and DFID, as a Department, to be central to the British Government. We should see ourselves as a Department that is central to the interests of the security of our country, of the prosperity of our country and on the influence of our country around the world. I would like DFID to see itself as a self-confident ambitious Department, joining up with others, whether it is around trade, the Home Office or defence, and of course the Foreign Office, working side by side as separate, sovereign, independent Departments of state, choosing to collaborate with each other.

I have just one final word on the context, which is that poverty is changing. It is increasingly going to be focused on sub-Saharan Africa. We need to complete the job of eradicating extreme poverty there and, at the same time, adapt and modernise the way that we do development around the world, with partnerships in the Middle East and Asia. All the while, as the Secretary of State says, we are bringing back the connection to the British people whose money we are spending. That is an exciting agenda. I look forward to working with you on it and to being held to account, hearing your views.

**Q4 James Duddridge:** Theresa May appointed joint Ministers across DFID and the Foreign Office, yet to a degree—and this is changing slowly—there have been silos underneath within their private offices and beyond, which are separate. Are there advantages in looking at units like the Nigeria unit that bring together the FCO and DFID, but also many other Departments, and at a lower level making sure there are much greater



synergies in co-location and single offices, not so much from a financial efficiency perspective but integrating the different views?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I would say two things. One of the things that I have been particularly interested to learn in my induction is not just how we do things at DFID, but how things are done across Whitehall and also in country, where things work well and where they do not. We are looking to see how we can really create a Jupiter sling effect in that our output is more than the sum of its parts. We are looking at the alignment of our planning cycles between Departments, for example, and looking at products that are produced, on which Ministers depend when they are making decisions. We are assuring they are really being utilised across Whitehall.

I have been very impressed with how country offices work. Getting that absolutely hand in glove in Whitehall is something that we should strive to do. Part of that is ministerial operational oversight as to what is happening. It is elevating our priorities and asks at a country level to Whitehall and ensuring that Ministers can easily access that information, the strategy and the asks that we might take. What are our objectives here? It is also about rapport between people doing these roles. I know that my new Permanent Secretary is very passionate about that, but I have tried to do that as a new Secretary of State with our joint Ministers. I take my single DFID Minister and our joint Ministers, and I go to Foreign Office prayers, so we have the strategic overview there. The Ministers are not having to repeat themselves twice a week. I still have DFID prayers, but we are looking at things from a slightly different lens.

In those sensible operational issues, we can have much more effect and we can absolutely be on our game as Ministers. There are some other things that we can do to really enhance that, so that is a big focus of mine and I know Matthew is very interested in that as well.

Q5 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** I will have to go shortly afterwards, because I have to go to Senegal. I hope there will be some announcements. You mentioned about moral obligations and I was also really pleased to hear you mention tax reforms. I think you made a number of comments about that in the Chamber, earlier on the other week. ICAI gave tax an “amber to red” in terms of DFID’s fulfilment in looking at tax reform. The response from the Department was quite defensive, in that it said tax policy domestically is “Nothing to do with us, gov. We’re not going to get involved”. That is how I read it. That was of course the response before you were in post. Are you maybe shifting your feelings on that now, in terms of a bit more co-ordination across Government, or have I misread the DFID response to the ICAI report?

**Penny Mordaunt:** From my impressions of the Department and where its focus is, you might be misreading that. What you will see in my approach is an evolution of what the Department is doing. It has done a considerable amount of work in this area. It very much views looking at not just tax but also illicit money flows as part—not just part but a major



part—of many of the areas that we are focused on, from modern slavery to straight economic development. This is absolutely central to what we do. What you will see is perhaps a more high-profile focus on those sorts of issues and what that might mean for where we are operating and what we are doing. I can tell you it is absolutely at the heart of many of the things we are doing.

**Q6** **Mr Sharma:** Congratulations to both of you and welcome. My question is directed to Mr Rycroft. You indicated a few areas in your introduction, but this would be another opportunity to elaborate. What will you bring to this role from your previous role as the UK Ambassador to the UN? Is there any extra in what you see as the vision for the future, by engaging in the multilaterals?

**Matthew Rycroft:** Thank you, Mr Sharma. I will try to bring three things. First of all, a passionate belief in the sustainable development goals and the values that underpin that framework for the whole of development for the 15 years. Secondly, I will bring a belief in the multilateral system. It is good for a country like the UK to have a system of multilateral organisations, including but not only the United Nations, which works. That gives us scale and reach, and it allows us to do things that we could not possibly do on our own as a country. Thirdly, I will also bring the desire to see that system reformed. It is not good enough for the challenges of the 21st century, so I am very glad that the UK is leading the way, with others, to improve the UN system. That journey will continue. We have already announced that 30% of our funding will be dependent on each individual part of that multilateral system meeting the right level of results and of reform. That is a leading role that the UK is playing, and I look forward to continuing to do that.

**Q7** **Henry Smith:** Secretary of State, welcome. You mentioned in your opening remarks that this is a key moment for Britain in the world. In that context, you wrote recently in the *Telegraph* about developing a Brexit-ready strategy for the Department, in terms of boosting international trade and investment. Does that mark an evolution and a move towards implicitly tied aid, in your view?

**Penny Mordaunt:** No, it does not. We do need a new trade offer and I have been delighted to work very closely with Liam Fox on that. That will be a central part of my new development offer, but tied aid does not work. I have seen that all over the world. That is not where we want to go and, actually, we do not have to do that. Whether it is NGOs, contractors, British expertise in our public services or elsewhere, we do not need the help, quite frankly. We can compete. We should compete. If we care about good development, it is the right thing to do. It will not involve tied aid, but it will deal with some of the tough things that have been puzzling civil servants for a long time, such as how to ensure that there is a fair, level playing field, for example. We have a very attractive offer on that.



Also, are we providing the right service to British business? We rely on British business. I have just come back from Kenya, where I have seen amazing entrepreneurs, not just supplying jobs but also delivering fantastic healthcare, sanitation and all sorts of other things. We rely on British business, but we need to work much more strategically with them. We should be talking to businesses about the investments they are planning on making, the major players, and ensuring that again that Jupiter sling effect is created with them. Also, there is a fantastic network of young entrepreneurs out there, who are passionate about this agenda and looking to help create some of those jobs we want to see in Africa.

**Q8 Richard Burden:** If you go back to 2015, over 80% of the UK's official development assistance was spent by DFID, with less than 20% being spent by other Departments. If you look at two years ago, 2016, the proportion that DFID was spending was down to just under 74%. The UK aid strategy suggests that that trend of more and more aid being spent by Departments other than DFID is a trend that is going to continue. Why?

**Penny Mordaunt:** The motivations for doing this are several. I am DFID Secretary of State, but I am a member of Her Majesty's Government, and my view is that whoever is spending the money needs to spend it well. They need to spend it strategically. I have read the same reports and analysis that you will have done over many years about when that is spent and the rush to spend money, because they have to. I literally have looked through every project. I have looked through projects that have received public criticism and where they have originated. I have looked at why they have attracted criticism and I have looked at what that spend is actually delivering. Across Whitehall, we need to raise our game on how we are spending this money. That is not just about value for money and the aid impact; it is about having a really good answer as to why it is that we are funding that. It is also about ensuring that, as I have phrased, it is not just spent well, but it could not be spent better. Why are we doing this and not this?

Part of my opening gambit, if you like, is that we need, as DFID, to have a new offer to Whitehall, because the expertise in how to do this really well, how to track it and how to work strategically is in DFID. Everything, from our finance department that lands the 0.7% with incredible skill through to the subject matter experts, is in DFID. We need to be more plugged into Whitehall Departments, looking at the areas where they want to add value, crafting a much better offer. As I alluded to in my op-ed, I would also like to have projects that deliver a much more explicit win for the UK's interests as well. Without that, we will not be doing aid well. That is my absolute belief. We can ensure that we are doing both of those things and that is critical.

**Q9 Richard Burden:** I am sure everybody would agree that, whether spent by DFID or other Government Departments, aid needs to be spent well



and wisely. What I am trying to get at is why it is an apparently conscious aim of Government to spend more through other Government Departments. As you say, the expertise is principally within DFID, so what is it trying to achieve? Is it to be able to reach 0.7% more quickly? Is it about achieving better outcomes somehow? If it is the latter, what are those better outcomes you think it will achieve?

**Penny Mordaunt:** The expertise in DFID is around the management and design of those programmes. In particular areas, research, for example, or education, we have subject matter experts and hubs for those academic communities. We are going to be in this business for a long time, so we really need to establish some partnerships and some meaningful partnerships. Looking at the work that we do in healthcare, for example, we do not have an explicit partnership out there branded with the NHS, but the work that the focus on health has, the impact it has on enabling us to deliver our objectives and also to benefit the UK taxpayer as well is enormous. It is incredible, from research to diagnostic tests to treatments going on in NHS wards right now. I agree that this should make sense and it needs to make sense, but it does and that is one example of that. There would be others in other Departments. Where it makes sense, we should do it.

Q10 **Richard Burden:** You said a moment or so ago that you felt that, whether it is spent by DFID or other Government Departments, a key focus of aid spend should be the promotion of British interests. The International Development Act puts a primary focus and purpose of overseas development assistance and British aid as being the reduction in poverty. Do you see that changing in any way?

**Penny Mordaunt:** No, it cannot change. I do not want it to change. Even if I did want it to change, I could not change it. Be in no doubt that this is our core mission. That is what we are here to do. We should recognise that that is good for the UK too, for reasons I do not need to explain to you. We have a moral obligation, when we are spending taxpayers' money, to do it in the smartest way possible, in part because it makes what we do more sustainable. If I can deliver the same effect by also building capacity to provide that service in the future, I am going to do that. It is not good enough that projects are good and delivering good results. We have to demonstrate that we cannot do better for that pound spent and that requires a much more collaborative relationship with other Government Departments, and that is one thing I hope to achieve.

Q11 **Chair:** Secretary of State, you used the term "core mission" with regard to poverty reduction. One of the concerns that many have is that, yes, indeed that is DFID's core mission, but is it the core mission of the other Government Departments?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I can reassure you on that point. I have to say, probably more than any other role—this is my fourth Department—once the news was out that I was in post, I was inundated by ideas and





suggestions from ministerial and other colleagues. I can reassure you there.

**Q12 Paul Scully:** Thank you to the Secretary of State for coming. Both of you are only recently in post but, in oral evidence to the Committee last October, your predecessor told us that DFID works with other Departments to up their standards. You have been talking a little bit about your aspirations to up standards and ways of working. It sounds from what you said that you want to continue that, but do you have any concrete examples of where that has happened and how you have measured it as a Department?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Do you mean historic progress?

**Paul Scully:** I appreciate that the last few months or last year are before you were in post, but do you have real examples of where DFID has gone into one of the other Departments, looked at the quality of ODA or the quality of their working on delivering that ODA?

**Penny Mordaunt:** There are several examples that I can describe in that respect. One of the areas that I particularly want to focus on is the tools that we use in the Department. They are incredibly sophisticated. They also Hoover up what else is going on in the particular theatre as well. One of the things that I know my predecessor had done and was trying to do was to share these tools across Whitehall. There has been some progress and some warmup to doing that, but that is one thing that I would like to achieve.

With regard to individual Departments, there are a number of initiatives that have been set up, from cross-Whitehall ODA communications teams to provide that strategic overview about what is happening in various Departments and that operational oversight. There has been expertise given as to how to manage and design programmes. Historically, where there have been things that have not necessarily been of the quality that you would like, people have gone in and done post-mortems on that. There has been a lot of work to try to get things in a better place and to ensure that the expertise we have is out there. There are some really nifty technical tools that we have that are not yet shared across Whitehall. That is the next step for us. I do not know whether Matthew wants to add anything.

**Matthew Rycroft:** I would just add one thing to what the Secretary of State said and give one particular example. As the Secretary of State says, this is a crucial agenda for DFID. We have a role to play in ensuring coherence of the whole of the Government's ODA spending and to make sure that it is all as high quality as DFID spending. There are lots of different models for how to do that. The one that has caught my eye so far, on which I am working closely with the Permanent Secretary, is how the Department for International Trade does it. There is a unit of staff there, who come from DFID but are in the Department for International Trade, who are working on this aid and trade agenda, which



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

is managing to do two things at once. It is managing to help tackle extreme poverty and it is laying the foundations for better creation of markets, with which British companies will be able to trade in the future.

**Q13 Paul Scully:** As penholders, you are the guys who ultimately are being judged on how that ODA is spent and that it is maintaining focus. How do you make sure that it is maintaining that? I guess it is enforcement, really, because we have talked around the issue of your responsibility.

**Penny Mordaunt:** I think this is about collective responsibility. The existing framework has been criticised. I am responsible for the numbers but not completely responsible for the quality. There is different oversight and scrutiny of those two aspects. This is really about Government as a whole, what they want to deliver, the poverty that they want to tackle and the partnerships that they want to form. We need to develop that culture. There are some practical things that we can do to get there. The focus understandably has been on external rules and we must continue that agenda on ODA, but we also need to look at how we operate in Whitehall.

**Q14 Paul Scully:** There was discussion in the media about aligning ODA with foreign policy more. There will often be times when that is clear, and you can see how that will work and benefit the costs of the agenda. Is there any more that you can do as a Department to make sure that foreign policy aims and objectives do not undermine the core of what you are doing or trying to achieve?

**Penny Mordaunt:** This is why it is important that we are a Department, because ODA, as we choose to spend it, and rightly across Whitehall, is with Departments that are not just internationally facing. Every Department has some aspects of international work, but there are also primarily domestic-facing Departments. I think some of the most exciting potential partnerships actually sit in those Departments, in healthcare and in education. Although I am envied by my oppos around the world, because I have a seat on the National Security Council, and rightly so, there is an acceptance that that is not the only show in town with regard to what we do. That is very clear. We should have a view to our national interests, which include human rights and all sorts of other things that we also wish to see happen. This is why it is important that there is a standalone Department, because we face every way on ODA and we need to recognise that.

**Q15 Paul Scully:** Do you see the share of ODA that you are spending continuing to decline, as you push it out to other Departments? Is that a trend that you see continuing?

**Penny Mordaunt:** It needs to be driven by what we want to achieve. I am very fortunate that I have inherited some good strategies, which have really helped inform my new offer, but that offer needs to be shared across Whitehall. We need to look at where those partnerships need to be sited. Global health security will be helped if the expertise in the NHS



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

is plugged in, and our NHS will be helped by learnings from being part of the global security network. That is what we need to be driven by. It is what we are trying to do and who is best placed to do that.

**Q16 Paul Scully:** You talked earlier on about the willingness of other Departments to get involved and engage in development in general, and the suggestions you have had. Is that something that you have seen because of their increasing share? Did you see it in your other Departments previously as well, in Departments not necessarily under your remit, but as a whole?

**Penny Mordaunt:** We need to create a mechanism and space for people to think what the possibilities are, and the opportunities that we bring, especially at this monumental time when we are going global, as we say. We can have more collaboration on designing programmes and spotting opportunities. Our guys in country will spot opportunities for British business. They will spot opportunities for applying British-grown technologies. They will spot all sorts of opportunities, and we should be feeding those opportunities into Government Departments. They will have their own objectives and I am very interested in how we can also help them meet those objectives while not diluting our mission. That is just smart use of taxpayers' money, but I want to change the culture slightly on that. It is not that people are not willing or interested; it is just that we have some ideas and expertise that they could really utilise and currently are not really capitalising on as much as they could.

**Q17 Mr Lewis:** Good afternoon. Congratulations on your respective new roles. I have a related question, which is about how effective the cross-Whitehall ministerial group is, in terms of ODA, in affecting decision-making. How effective is that particular group? Are there other ministerial mechanisms that are being put in place to oversee ODA across Government? Do you see it, Secretary of State, as your personal role to bring together or to lead the bringing together of that spend, so it is spent in an effective and strategic way?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I have mentioned a few things that I have been interested in to try to get maximum effect from what people are doing across Whitehall. In looking at how my officials in particular interact with other Government Departments, we have very good and developed relationships across Whitehall. As I have mentioned before, there are some operational things we can do to strengthen the opportunities that Ministers have, in terms of things working well. I have mentioned the culture as well. I would say that there is more to do. It is not in a bad place, but I would like to improve on it.

**Q18 Mr Lewis:** Have you participated in the ministerial group meetings yet?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I have not yet, no.

**Q19 Mr Lewis:** How often does it meet? Do you know how often that particular group has met in the last 12 months?



**Penny Mordaunt:** I do not know when the last session was. Most of my interactions so far, apart from meetings like the NSC, will have been bilateral, which have been very frequent indeed. They have been with a particular view on our ODA spend.

**Matthew Rycroft:** If I could add one thing to what the Secretary of State said, we can reassure the Committee that your concerns about the overall coherence of British spend on official development assistance are absolutely shared by our Department. We see a space for having a more influential role in a collaborative way, around Whitehall, about how other Departments spend their official development assistance, alongside how we spend ours. We will make sure that the totality adds up to the best possible bang for buck for our country and for our Government at this time. We will use all of the structures available to do that. If we need to create new structures, then we will recommend that as well. We have allies; we have a lot of people who share that concern, including the Treasury, of course.

**Penny Mordaunt:** The other thing I would add to that is I have also looked at what others do. To give you an example, when I visited my US oppo, we did a deep dive into how they operate, for instance on civilian military co-operation and other areas as well. I am interested in how we can develop this, but things are in reasonable shape.

Q20 **Mr Lewis:** Could I just ask that perhaps you could write to the Committee on the cross-Whitehall ministerial group to tell us how often it has met in the past couple of years and perhaps what the plans are for the future?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Certainly.

Q21 **Chris Law:** The UK Government have made approaches to the Development Assistance Committee about changes to ODA rules, which have been a concern for a number of organisations, including several journalists who are tackling it just now, particularly with the humanitarian support we gave to the Caribbean in the autumn, as a result of the hurricanes. It touches on climate change, which I want to come back to in a minute. Can you tell me if there are going to be further changes you seek from the DAC? If so, how do they reflect on your core mission for poverty reduction, given that these British overseas territories are not within their typical gross national income for lower-income countries?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I fully appreciate why people might find our requests on this odd. We have committed and believe in 0.7% and then we seem to spend a lot of time and energy trying not to spend it. I understand why people find that narrative odd, but the reforms that we have asked for and will continue to press for are the right things to do. We are focused on alleviating poverty and that requires us to be in the places where that primarily exists, but if your island has been flattened by a hurricane that is a humanitarian crisis. Just because you were doing well yesterday, it should not preclude you from receiving assistance. Indeed,



Britain stepped up and provided that assistance. It did not deter us, but other nations might not necessarily be in a position to do that unless there was greater flexibility on those rules. We were right to press for that. It makes sense. Actually, the man in the street understands why that makes sense.

**Q22 Chris Law:** Can I just interject there, if you do not mind? I completely agree with your position but, to come directly from development assistance money to ODA, do you see that as the right place that that money should have come from for the humanitarian crisis?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I do. I set out that I understand why other nations, which do not spend 0.7%, by the way, might say that this is not something you should be doing. Unless we allow ourselves to assist places that may have suffered from a natural disaster or are suddenly in a dramatically different situation than they were the day before, when their wealth was counted in a particular way, we are just going to create problems. The best way to help those nations is swift action to get them back on their feet and save lives. Fortunately, we were in a position to help. It is perfectly possible that in the future we, or another nation, might not have been in a position to help unless they had those flexibilities. Where it makes sense—and that is one example where it does—we should push other activities that are fundamental to us delivering our mission. Security, for example, has space for us to be able to act. We want to do more on peacekeeping.

I have met the DAC chair and I paid tribute to my predecessor for pushing this agenda and securing commitments. We need to see them implemented now and that is one thing I have asked. I have asked for a timetable on that, but we will continue to push for those things that are sensible, further relaxation of the rules on peacekeeping being one. Our core mission has helped, not hindered on that.

**Q23 Chris Law:** Just on to the next question, I want to ask a little bit more about the impact of climate change. I have raised this before, but what happened in the Caribbean in the autumn has now been seen by climatologists as a direct result. You talked about integration with other Departments and influence. Just to give you an example, last year, the Department for International Trade spent 99.4% of its UK export finance support for energy in developing countries on fossil fuels. Do you seek to change that and, if so, when?

**Penny Mordaunt:** This is a good example of how we need to work in a joined-up way across Government, both looking at what our priorities are at a country level, but also at a thematic level too. It is also an example of why, although we very much feel that our multilateral partners need to be focused on extreme poverty and countries where that is the case, we also need to allow organisations like the World Bank a bit of flexibility on where they work and what they are focused on. In order to deliver their plans on climate change, for example, they need that.



The message in all of this with regard to partners is flexibility, a clear message and a clear objective in what we are trying to achieve, but within the rules. We need the flexibility to do that. Certainly, I have already had discussions with Claire Perry, who is very interested. Again, this is another example of a Minister who is very forward-leaning and sees opportunities for our agenda in her portfolio. We have already had some conversations about getting that joined-up approach happening and the opportunities that we have to enable developing nations to be greener, as our nation went through a similar cycle to them.

**Matthew Rycroft:** Could I just add two points?

**Chair:** Very briefly, because we are running behind now.

**Matthew Rycroft:** First of all, on the Caribbean, it is significant that the economies involved were small and undiversified. The impact of the humanitarian crisis was economy-wide, which is relevant to the judgment about whether it should count as ODA or not. Secondly, as the Secretary of State said on peacekeeping, her predecessor secured an increase in the coefficient of peacekeeping, which counts as official development assistance. It went up from 7% to 15%. From my experience in New York, 15% of peacekeeping is still a rather small proportion, in terms of the impact that it can have on development. There is a lot of join-up between peacekeeping, development, humanitarian crises and everything else. Everything is interconnected. When you have a peacekeeping operation, it has more than a 15% impact on poverty eradication and development.

Q24 **Chair:** Can I move us on to global education? You will know that the first report of our Committee in this Parliament was on education. We have the Global Partnership for Education replenishment event in Senegal tomorrow and Friday. We urged in our report a bold and strong UK commitment to replenishment, and supported GPE's own request for \$500 million over three years. Are you able to assure us today that we will be pleased when announcements are made by the UK, I presume later this week?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I hope you will be pleased. This is an issue that the public cares about very much. It is clearly the margin of victory in what we are trying to do. There are two caveats that I would place on the focus on money. One is that, if we are going to do this and be successful in the objective, it is not just bums on seats in schools. Actually, we have people who have the opportunities to achieve their full potential and we also have to look at the quality of what is being done. Quality teachers and national reforms have to be done in partnership. It is no good pledging an enormous amount of money unless we are also committed. When I say "we", I mean all the donors must be committed to ensuring that quality is going on.

The second thing I would say is that we also must not forget the other things that need to take place for children to be in school and getting a



good education, such as health programmes. Sorry to do this to you after lunch, but I have been startled by the impact on children attending school and being able to attend school from deworming programmes and those sorts of things. Again, this is about doing this in the most effective way. I will be able to look you in the eye, Chairman, and say that the proposal that we are putting together, and also the expertise that is going to be put behind it and the strategy that we have put together, will deliver the best results for the money that the UK is spending.

- Q25 **Chair:** The Committee, on a cross-party basis, absolutely supports both points on quality and effectiveness. The point I would make is that to deliver quality costs money. You are right: it is not just bums on seats, but you need to get the quality teachers who turn up every day and are there in the school. They need to be paid properly, so there is a price tag attached to that. The other element that we highlighted in our report as a strength of the Global Partnership for Education is the requirements it places on domestic, recipient Governments to increase their own expenditure on education. I think that is something that the UK Government would want to support.

**Penny Mordaunt:** Yes.

- Q26 **Paul Scully:** Forgive me; I have to disappear shortly after this. Secretary of State, thank you very much for what you are doing to keep the media and the public eye on the Rohingya situation, specifically on the Bangladesh side. I wanted to ask you what the Department and the Government are doing to improve the lives of the Rohingya still living in Burma, especially in the IDP camps.

**Penny Mordaunt:** We are doing an immense amount. I very much wanted, in my first few weeks, to visit and see what was happening on the ground operationally and how effective the support we were providing was being. We have helped in many ways, not just in terms of our donations, nutrition, water and sanitation, and all that that is levering, but also in our expertise. Of particular note in most recent times is the deployment of the emergency medical team in combating the diphtheria outbreak. They have done a tremendous job, both in terms of the vaccination programme but also the capacity-building. I was very exercised about ensuring that all that could be done to stop women and children being trafficked out of the camps was being done. We were very fortunate in that the army is a peacekeeping army, with huge expertise and capacity, to go back to our previous point. The police, who were largely looking after the camps at night, did not have some of that expertise and the UK has helped there too.

Combined with this are obviously the diplomatic efforts that are being made by the Foreign Office and, in conjunction with that, DFID's diplomatic efforts to try to get a quick focus on the medium term. We have done a huge amount to alleviate the initial crisis, but we have to have a medium-term plan for these individuals. The camp is not



sustainable and we need to start thinking in the medium term and to support the Bangladeshi Government in doing that as well.

**Q27 Paul Scully:** You were quite forthright in saying that any repatriation deal that is just going to send people back to a huge camp on the Burmese side just was not plausible. What is being done to ensure that that does not happen and that it does not lead to more internment camps and a sense of apartheid? Can I ask, alongside that, what we are doing to ensure that there is a Rohingya voice within the discussion between Bangladesh and Burma?

**Penny Mordaunt:** That is an excellent point. We are doing this in several ways. First of all, one of the questions that I asked to our team on the ground was: how do people know what their rights are? We heard reports, and you will have heard reports in the media, of people being coerced. There was a report of a ration card being removed from somebody and them being coerced into saying that they would return. When we hear of such things we investigate them. I am confident that I have good oversight and I can get very swift information back, if we have any whiff of any of that sort of activity going on.

It is very important that people know what their rights are. It is very important that people are not given false hope and look to return. In all I do in the future, whatever I might be looking to do, whether in Rakhine or in our diplomatic efforts that are being made, we will not give false assurances. We must ensure that, if people are going to return, it is voluntary, sustainable and done with dignity. We can ensure that those people can live in peace and security. They have fled from the most appalling atrocities and they are not going to go back unless they can be assured of their lives and their rights. I feel very strongly about that. Giving them a voice in this process is fundamental. We need to do that formally. When I was there, I asked informally what their wishes were and it is to return, as it is with most refugees, but only under those circumstances. There are greater efforts being made in giving them that formal voice, which is required. I will not have any truck with decisions being taken without their voice and their views being at that table.

**Q28 Mrs Latham:** Good afternoon, Secretary of State. Can you tell us why you have only deployed two sexual violence experts to the Rohingya camps?

**Penny Mordaunt:** There is a slight misunderstanding about what these individuals are there to do. When that question has been asked in the past, it has been about either providing support to people or investigating what has happened to them and that is not what these individuals are there to do. They are there to provide expertise to teams on the ground and, very much as I described earlier, my concern was that the capacity in the local police force, which was absent, needed to be addressed. I was appointed on 9 November and they were deployed on 14 November. I was Minister of State for the Armed Forces when this initiative was initiated, and I understand the work they do very well. I know that they





## HOUSE OF COMMONS

have done good work, but they are not there to provide either the support that individuals need or as part of any legal process to collect and gather data. In my view, they were sufficient to do that and they have done some good.

**Q29 Mrs Latham:** A couple of years ago, I went to some side events at the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey. There, I learned to my horror, that many UN peacekeepers and NGOs are actually the perpetrators of sexual violence towards refugees and internally displaced people. I am very concerned about this and about the raping of these poor women and children that is going on by people they should be able to trust. I have mentioned it on several occasions. To be fair, your predecessor was starting to tackle it. What are you going to do to make the voices of British people heard that this is unacceptable and these people should not go from one operation to another, and one organisation to another, freely when they have been found out?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Two things are important in addressing that. A couple of weeks ago, alongside colleagues from the Foreign Office and the MoD, I launched a new plan to ensure that women and girls are at the heart of our humanitarian response. That includes giving them a voice in how that support is delivered. You cannot make assumptions about this. You cannot make assumptions about what people's needs are or the difference some things will make.

Just to give you an anecdote, the torches that UK aid has paid for, which are enabling women to go to the loo without being terrified of what might happen to them, are having a disproportionate positive impact on how they are feeling and their security. You might not think that unless you had heard that concern from them directly. We need to ensure that women and girls are being heard when humanitarian plans are being developed. That is one thing that we can do to address their concerns.

We also need to recognise that, where there are issues around safeguarding or individuals, those things are addressed. I am going to make a general point about some of the partners that we work with. I understand that there is competition in organisations. I understand that their reputation matters to them. I understand that there is a disincentive in the system for them to share and collaborate, and to tackle issues, as you have described, in a very overt way, but we need to encourage that in the reforms that we want to press and push. Where you have great collaboration the impact that has on what we deliver with our other donors is massive. That focus on excellence needs to increase. Currently, we are not getting what we can from the money that we have put in. We could be doing things smarter, and we know that because we know what good looks like. That is one thing on which we need to focus.

**Matthew Rycroft:** We have started being very direct with the organisations that we fund to say that, if they want to carry on receiving British funding, they must have zero tolerance for anything like this. If



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

there is any allegation, it must be followed up properly. If there are any perpetrators, they need to be removed from the organisation.

Q30 **Mrs Latham:** Apparently it has been going on for years and everyone has been complicit, but kept quiet. I think that is appalling. Treating the most vulnerable in the world like that is something we should be standing up to. The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative team was reduced from 73 to 38 by the FCO review in 2015. However, the Government told the House of Lords Sexual Violence in Conflict Committee in June 2016 that this team still consisted of 74 experts. How many are there?

**Penny Mordaunt:** We have that information, because I read it earlier. I am going to double-check, so I do not make the same mistake. We have 38 independent experts, 26 of whom are women. That is the volume of the team.

Q31 **Chair:** That is a reduction then. It was previously 70-something and it has been reduced to 30-something. It is not that we have our wires crossed about the 70-something.

**Penny Mordaunt:** I will need to come back to you on the historic numbers.

**Chair:** Could you write to us on this, Secretary of State?

**Penny Mordaunt:** What I would say is that, having seen not just how this was formed, but also having had recent discussions about how to develop the new plan we have, we are looking to do much more collaborative work with particular nations that are doing this really well. Canada is one. The Nordic countries are another. I am very keen that, given the call that might be made on us, we are facing this year an unprecedented demand on humanitarian assistance and working in the smartest way with those other nations, so that we have the capacity to deliver. As I say, even in a situation as huge as the Rohingya camp, with the role that these people have, we are talking about a few individuals making a massive difference and giving advice to build that local capacity. I know that this has been looked at very recently in terms of resource. I think we need to work smarter with other nations, but I am not uncomfortable about that number at the moment.

Q32 **Mrs Latham:** It would be good to get the definitive historic number. Obviously you will feel that the team is maintaining its effectiveness now that it has been streamlined, because you did not know what it was like before.

**Penny Mordaunt:** I would say to that that this is a team, but it is not the be-all-and-end-all of this initiative. Training on sexual violence in conflict and sexual violence against women and girls is now embedded in the mainstream of many of the training programmes that we run, across Whitehall, for all sorts of individuals, not least the armed forces. The capacity of HMG and our partners and agencies as a whole, on this



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

agenda, has had a massive uplift over the last few years. This team has a very specific and narrow role. It is just one part of the arsenal that we have to deploy in these circumstances.

**Q33 Richard Burden:** Could I take you on to Yemen? Can I perhaps start by thanking you for the impact you had in your early visit to Djibouti? In a minute or two, I may ask you a bit more about Hodeidah. In advance of that, though, could I just draw your attention to the OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen, which was published a week or two ago, which is looking for just short of \$3 billion to provide the assistance that they think is needed? Could you say what specific support the UK is going to give to that appeal?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I cannot make any further announcements on that today. Obviously I did make some announcements on my visit about assistance that we are going to provide. We are focused on getting other donors to step up, and that is important, not just in terms of getting others to pay their fair share, but also in getting the political momentum that now needs to be built behind a political process to try to get this situation brought to an end. I cannot give you any further information today on numbers, but it remains a priority for us.

**Q34 Richard Burden:** Although you cannot give us numbers today, can we anticipate an announcement on that soon? I take your point about getting others to step up to the plate. One of the messages around the education report that came out was that, actually, Britain stepping up to the plate can be a catalyst to encouraging others to do likewise. I would guess the same would apply in terms of a humanitarian crisis like Yemen, so can we expect that announcement?

**Penny Mordaunt:** We will continue to be committed to alleviating the humanitarian crisis there. We have not been shirking our responsibilities, but I want to deliver a clear message that others need to step up too. I am very focused on this situation, from my early visit and my very clear oversight about what is happening with the humanitarian effort there. The most helpful message I can give at the moment is that others need to lean in.

**Q35 Richard Burden:** Could we perhaps move on to Hodeidah? What is your reading of the current situation as far as access to Hodeidah is concerned? How can we push further on that?

**Penny Mordaunt:** We are in a reasonable place. We are in a much better place than we were in early December. It was very clear that humanitarian relief, commercial shipping and fuel, which is obviously very important too, was not going into Hodeidah in the volumes that it needed to and, at one stage, at all. What has been critical in getting movement on this is to really understand the Saudis' concerns around security and being across the detail of that. I have got down to a very tactical level of how we can ensure that their concerns are being met as those deliveries and that freight gets in.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

I am in regular touch with them. I have daily updates on the volume of aid getting in and other shipping getting in. I have the detail of the clearance times that it takes. I have details and feedback from UNVIM on how that operation is working and how it can be improved. As well as that, we are looking at other things that we can do to ensure that we are maximising every other opportunity we have to ensure that fuel and food and other supplies are getting into Yemen. We need to continue that. We are in a much better place than we were, but there is more to do. We will have to adapt as and if the security position changes. I have a direct line in and I should put on record my thanks to everyone that has enabled us to have that very clear operational oversight, including those from the UK who are bolstering the UNVIM operation.

**Q36 Richard Burden:** One of the things that a number of people from different sources and interests have been saying is that, if access through Hodeidah is going to be maintained in the medium term, and indeed if not only can shipments get into Hodeidah but, actually, they can transport on from that in a way that reaches their intended destination without necessarily being subject to informal or formal extra taxes along the way, there needs to be some kind of clarity about who is responsible for Hodeidah. One of the suggestions for that situation is that the United Nations maybe needs to step up to the plate, perhaps adopt a resolution and assume that responsibility for ensuring access. Would you support that?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I have to say that, in my limited experience, it is not a piece of paper or even an arrangement with an organisation. It is actually looking at why things are going on currently, both in terms of the port but also beyond that. Although everyone has understandably been very focused on the port, we have been equally focused on what is happening elsewhere, where the checkpoints are, the delivery times from the south up to where the bulk of the population is and the costs of various options in order to get that aid or other supplies to where it needs to be. That is where we need to focus and where I am intending on focusing. That is actually what has delivered progress.

As well as the port continuing to be receiving aid, there have been improvements in how that is being done. Just to give you an example, a few days ago we had the ship clearance times down to 24 hours for the first time. We are building capacity there and in the UNVIM operation. We made some requests at the EHO operation as well, as to things that we think need to happen practically to get this to work. Those are the things that we need to concentrate on.

**Q37 Richard Burden:** Do you not think that clarity around responsibility might help that process?

**Penny Mordaunt:** There is clarity around who is supposed to be doing what at the moment. What we need to focus on is ensuring that they are.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Matthew Rycroft:** If I could add one thing from my previous role, it would be very difficult for the United Nations to take on that sort of operational role. As a minimum, they would either need a request from the host authorities, which would not be forthcoming in this case, at the moment, or, as your question implies, a resolution of the Security Council. When I was there, there was certainly not a consensus.

Q38 **Chair:** Is this something that the US is pushing for?

**Matthew Rycroft:** No.

Q39 **James Duddridge:** Turning to atrocity prevention and identity-based violence, what is the Department doing? What is the Department doing specifically in terms of identifying some of the root causes and training DFID staff going forward?

**Matthew Rycroft:** Identity-based violence encompasses a whole range of things, as you know, Mr Duddridge. At the most extreme end, it is about helping to prevent genocide and other atrocities that are based on ethnicity, but there are lots of other things within prevention of this sort of violence. Within the stabilisation unit, we have people trained in deployments in these circumstances. There is a course available that allows participants to understand the key concepts relating to conflict, stability and insecurity, as well as identity-based violence. There are also courses available for staff to go on to help them operate in an environment where they would need to prevent or respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Those courses are available to all staff in the Department. They are not mandatory, but they are encouraged for staff who are going to areas where they would be relevant. We also have 65 conflict advisers in the Department, who are experts in areas related to this.

Q40 **James Duddridge:** I am curious. Burma and Burundi are obvious examples. How do you monitor on the ground if things are slightly worse in Rwanda today than two months ago and that kind of subtlety?

**Matthew Rycroft:** First of all, I should say this is day eight for me, so I do not have a full answer to that question yet. Thinking about it from first principles, one of the really difficult things to do, when you are working in an environment that could become a genocide or something as extreme as that, is knowing where the tipping points are. We rely on experts whose job it is to do that. Again relying on my previous role, there is a special representative who works directly for the UN Secretary-General, whose job is to highlight when a situation might be at risk of deteriorating into genocide. We as a country need to take account of those sorts of warnings as well.

Q41 **Chair:** On that, we highlighted in our report published two weeks ago on the Rohingya that organisations like Human Rights Watch and the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum were warning about the risks to the Rohingya years ago. There was a sense that the world was very slow, to be kind, in responding to that. What can we learn from that?



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Penny Mordaunt:** One of the changes that I have made, which I alluded to earlier, was just enabling the key decision-makers, and Ministers in particular, to have much more real-time reporting, not just on intelligence in a particular location and what might be happening, but also exactly that—media reports that we might not be getting in our news summary in the morning, and social media increasingly. It is just being really situationally aware, not just in the hotspots where I have visited but everywhere.

We have an amazing footprint out there. We have an amazing network that can gather such information and we have products in bucket-loads across Whitehall. We have introduced at DFID a weekly operational oversight, where we sit down with the senior teams to look at what has happened this week. We look at all of those sources of information and that gives me greater confidence that, where we are involved in a particular theatre, we are on it. We are doing everything we can. If there is an outbreak of whatever, we are deploying what we need to deploy. It also enables us to see what is coming at us over the horizon, in a better way.

Q42 **Mr Evans:** Can I ask if that is something you have introduced since you have become Secretary of State?

**Penny Mordaunt:** Yes.

Q43 **Mr Evans:** Was that not happening before?

**Penny Mordaunt:** It was to a degree. There was a weekly meeting, but it did not give you that whole piece. Where I have learned the value in that is from defence. That is not to say that the Department was not doing that. The Department has been doing that, but it has not been with ministerial oversight from the Secretary of State. That just enables us, and also enables my teams to make asks of me: "I need you go in and do this or secure that". It also just gives me that situational awareness. If I think that something is not being leaned into or I can see has a knock-on effect for something over here, I can do that, but the officials have been doing this for a long time.

Q44 **Chair:** Can I just ask briefly about the concept of the responsibility to protect, which is a very important doctrine? It came out of the Rwanda genocide, but many people say it is now utterly discredited because of the Libya experience. Without getting into the Libya experience, how do the Government see and how does DFID see the concept of us having a responsibility to protect, particularly in scenarios like the Rohingya crisis in Burma?

**Penny Mordaunt:** This is incredibly important, but also incredibly difficult. One of the areas that I have particularly asked that we focus on is around some of the stuff that we have not had immediate answers to. The House of Commons gets understandably very exercised with populations that are under siege, where we have very limited ability, with the best will in the world, to assist people in particular circumstances. I



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

will be giving a great deal of thought and have asked that we do more work to look at how we can protect such people. It is incredibly difficult and we are limited by the technology that we have, but it is something that we need to keep developing. We need to develop our capabilities, as well as our ability to oversee what is actually happening on the ground.

**Matthew Rycroft:** We need to do it in alliances and partnerships with others. Even if we strongly support the principle, which we do as a Government, there is definitely less support globally than there used to be.

**Chair:** We have three quite big questions left and less than 15 minutes, so we can all do the maths.

Q45 **James Duddridge:** How can you tie multilateral funding into a performance measure? At the moment, we just hand over a big pot of cash and it is hard to influence and monitor, because it is distant. How can you monitor it and increase the flow if it is doing well?

**Penny Mordaunt:** We do not just hand over a big pot of cash. There is actually quite a sophisticated way of tracking what is value for money, and doing the things that we want to see done. In part, there are the performance-related requirements of replenishment that we make, but also my predecessors reviewed how well each of the organisations that we donate to is doing against our mission and also the value-for-money aspects of that. There is always more to do. We have some stellar performers, Gavi being the most effective and most aligned to what we want to see happen. There are a lot though that are nowhere near that level of performance.

Q46 **James Duddridge:** Just to tease this out of you, Gavi is the superstar; who is in the naughty corner?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I am not going to be indiscreet in that fashion. There is one organisation that I have had a very tough conversation with. The replenishment was agreed before I took office, but I brought in some additional requirements about replenishment. Where I have particular concerns, the organisation needs to hear that from me first, if you will forgive me, Mr Chairman. I am really focused on the bottom-performing third of our multilaterals. I recognise the value of multilaterals, because we are a major donor and we can therefore lever more money than we are donating to the things that we want to see a focus on. This is actually a smart way of working, but only if it is doing what we need it to do and in a value-for-money way.

Q47 **Chair:** You mentioned the bottom third. Is UNESCO one of the organisations you are looking at?

**Penny Mordaunt:** UNESCO is not a performing organisation, I am afraid. It is one of the ones we have concerns about. They have had a management change and I know that she is very focused on the reform agenda. I have been very clear to her what we expect to see happen.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

She has got a tough job and we will support her in that. We are actually giving her some expertise to help, but she is under no illusion as to what we expect to see.

**Q48 Mr Lewis:** In terms of the UN, there is the importance of stressing the need for reform but, equally, we want to be supportive of the institution at a time when the public is very sceptical. How do you propose to maintain that balance between, on the one hand, demanding reform and challenge but, on the other, continuing to support the central role of the institution globally?

**Matthew Rycroft:** That is a very good question and you are right about the balance. I tried to reflect that in my answer to an earlier question about what I was going to bring to the job. There are some very valuable organisations in this country whose job it is to explain what the UN does for the British people. I am thinking about the UN Association. The UK branch of that is an extremely effective NGO, and there are others in the UK that work very well to support and improve the United Nations.

Behind the scenes as a Government, we need to speak truth to power and be a critical friend. We were instrumental in securing the appointment of António Guterres as the Secretary-General, and that puts us in a good position to work closely behind the scenes with him to help him deliver what is an ambitious reform agenda. Everyone who sees how we, as a country, work with the United Nations, including our humanitarian commitments, our peacekeeping and everything else that we do, would know that we want the UN to succeed and that we are a friend, even when we are criticising it. It is a question about getting the balance right.

In terms of the funding, as the Secretary of State has said, we continue to be a generous donor to the United Nations, but those contributions do not come as a blank cheque; they come with a very significant amount of performance management of targets and very robust measurement throughout the year. There are people working full-time on this in my former mission to the UN in New York, whose job it is to track and influence what different parts of the UN are doing, in order to improve their ability to do the job that we all want them to do.

**Penny Mordaunt:** The only thing I would add to that is that, where we have the common agenda with others, so again with my US counterpart, we should be making the asks on reform in a much more co-ordinated way. We are both major donors, but we would amplify our asks and our clout by doing it in a more joined-up way.

**Q49 Mr Lewis:** Do you see development as continuing to have a key role in terms of the UN or a growing role, looking forward? I am going to go off script here, very briefly. There were other evidence sessions, speaking to previous Secretaries of State, where we were concerned that the SDGs were not at the heart of the Department's agenda, surprisingly. They





were almost an afterthought. When we raised the issue of when the Department published its priorities, why were the SDGs not up there in the top line? Can you clarify where you stand on that?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I am happy to: they are at the heart of it. They are on my wall. That is what we are there to do and it is in the UK's interests that they are delivered. They are at the heart of what we do. In producing my plans, I have linked everything back to that. We are right to be focused on whether the plans that are in place are going to deliver them and we are right to be alert and realistic about what is required to deliver them, which is why "could not be spent better" is important.

To address your other point very briefly, I also think that we need to get the maximum bang out of every pound, euro and yen that is there to deliver those goals, but we have to have a much slicker way of doing it. We have to cut down bureaucracy. We have to cut down the layers and volume of some of the organisations that are involved in doing this. You are right that in the future there will be a much greater focus on who is doing what and why. I see where it works well and where you have a dramatic impact for no extra money is where you see that streamlining and people focused on the goal, as opposed to what they need to do for their particular organisation. That is what I am looking for.

Q50 **Henry Smith:** DFID often has competing priorities in terms of delivering aid where it is needed, but also not colluding and helping to prop up regimes that might have a very poor human rights record. I am interested to know how you will be looking to achieve that balance. Mr Rycroft, with regard to your previous role with the UN and your experience with the Human Rights up Front initiative, I would be interested to get a bit more perspective on that, from both of you.

**Penny Mordaunt:** I would hark back to the comment I made about that country focus and that situational awareness about what is happening and the circumstances around it. The public, in particular, is very exercised if they feel that we are, in any way, doing as you describe. At the same time, some of the worst atrocities, the worst crises that we can perhaps help avert, the people who we would most want to help and the British public would most want us to help are situated in those nations. It is a judgment call, but you need that situational awareness to be able to make the right call in any given circumstance. It is something that I have thought about a lot. I have also thought about how we can reflect that more explicitly in some of our spending decisions.

**Matthew Rycroft:** There are three big things that the United Nations does: peace and security, largely through the Security Council, which gives us a very privileged position as a permanent member; international development, which goes to Mr Lewis's question about the sustainable development goals; and then human rights, which is the third big thing that the UN does. It links very closely to our values as a country. The interface between development and human rights is absolutely crucial. The Human Rights up Front initiative is one that Ban Ki-moon, the former



UN Secretary-General, put forward to make sure that the human rights components of development and security work were present. It was quite controversial within the UN system, because there are plenty of countries you could think of that would not place human rights quite so centrally, in the way that we would. It was a very positive initiative.

It has been continued by António Guterres, and he has a very strong human rights record himself as well, including from his role heading the refugees bit of the UN previously. It is uphill work. The tide is pushing against us, but I can assure you that we, and many allies at the UN, are working very hard, day in, day out, to make sure that human rights are still central, including in many of the cases that the Committee has raised today.

**Penny Mordaunt:** Can I just add one very quick point? Very understandably, people focus on the worst human rights abuses, but there are other human rights abuses that go on that do not receive the same degree of profile. One of the things that we are looking to do in our programming and work that we are doing is around disability. Quite often, the rights of people with disability are not being upheld or adhered to. That is a way that we can help alleviate the situation that they are in. We need to bear in mind that aspect as well.

Q51 **Henry Smith:** Chair, may I just have a very brief supplementary before we conclude? I absolutely endorse what you are saying about reaching out and helping those with disabilities in developing countries. Could I press you on some specific examples of where UK aid is being delivered, where there are regimes with human rights records that we may disagree with? I am thinking of Burma, for example, Sudan and, up until relatively recently, Zimbabwe. Can you give us a little bit more of a perspective on your view, in terms of delivering aid to those most in need in those countries when, at the same time, not supporting those regimes in the way that they are behaving?

**Penny Mordaunt:** One of the mechanisms that the Department uses—I have seen it used and seen evidence of previous programming that has used this—is not just to launch a big, long programme. We have phases to it that are conditional. As we are designing programmes, we can then give ourselves the opportunity to extract our support or provide a further incentive for people to make progress. The Department does that as standard practice in many things it does, particularly in those theatres.

**Chair:** Can I say thank you to both of you for your evidence today? We look forward to seeing you both again in the future. I have four very quick takeaways from our discussion. First, it is to welcome very warmly the commitments you have given on the sustainable development goals and poverty reduction. It was great to hear that stated so clearly, and that you even have the SDGs on your wall, Secretary of State. That is very reassuring.

Secondly, what you have said about value for money is so important.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

You said it in terms of the priority in the Department itself, but you also said it with respect to multilateral organisations and other Government Departments. On a cross-party basis, we as a Committee entirely concur with you in that respect.

Thirdly, your personal commitment to disability has shone through again today. We have decided as a Committee, at some point, to conduct an inquiry into the Department's work on disability.

Finally, I was very struck by the laser-like focus you have on some of the key crises that we are facing at the moment, both the Rohingya crisis and the Yemen crisis. That is something very welcome, so many thanks for being here with us today. We look forward to future engagement on some of these very big humanitarian and development challenges in the future.