

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Work of the Minister of State for Africa, HC 900](#)

Tuesday 13 March 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 13 March 2018.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Ian Austin; Chris Bryant; Ann Clwyd; Mike Gapes; Ian Murray; Priti Patel; Andrew Rosindell; Mr Bob Seely; Royston Smith.

Questions 1-97

Witnesses

I: Harriett Baldwin MP, Minister of State for Africa, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Donal Brown, Director, East and Central Africa, Department for International Development, and Neil Wigan, Director, Africa, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Harriett Baldwin MP, Donal Brown and Neil Wigan.

Q1 **Chair:** Minister, we are grateful to you for coming to see us this afternoon at relatively short notice. Welcome to your first, and very far from your last, session before the Foreign Affairs Committee. We did not see your predecessor, although, to be fair, the Committee was formed late in the Parliament, so a number of questions might cover issues from a little before your time as Minister.

Q2 **Royston Smith:** Welcome, Minister. You are joint Minister for the FCO and for DFID. Can you tell us how that works in practical terms? Where do you have your office or offices, and how often do you report to the Secretaries of State—that sort of thing?

Harriett Baldwin: Of course. Thank you very much for having me. I am delighted to be here. I have brought along Neil Wigan, who is head of the Africa section at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Donal, who plays the same role in the Department for International Development, to symbolise the cross-departmental role. The practicalities are very straightforward. I have an office in both places, and the same private office moves between the two places. From a practical point of view, that is how it works.

More importantly, how does it work from the point of view of the role? After the decision was taken with my predecessor, to whom I pay tribute because he did an exceptional job, it was officially a joint role from 2017 onwards—after the general election. I came into the joint role as a new person, and I cannot really imagine how it was ever done as two separate roles. There is obviously so much interaction between what we do and the various elements of the role.

The way it ties together—the political, security and humanitarian aspects, and the very close work with the Department for International Trade on the prosperity side of things—makes complete sense. From a departmental point of view, both Departments value the fact that you have got that oversight in both important areas. So much of what we do in international development and in dealing with humanitarian crises is the result of the political situation on the ground. Being able to join that up with the political and security engagement is really important. I can't imagine doing the role in any other way.

Q3 **Royston Smith:** How do you report to the two Secretaries of State? How does that work with two Departments? It makes perfect sense the way you have just explained it to me—I have no argument with that—but there are still two Departments and two Secretaries of State. How does that work?

Harriett Baldwin: It works in that we have departmental prayers in both Departments. Alistair Burt and I report to both Select Committees, and we



HOUSE OF COMMONS

have two lots of departmental questions. Fortunately—this is helpful in this situation, but I can't imagine it will ever be otherwise—the Secretary of State for International Development and the Foreign Secretary work closely together on a range of different priorities across the two Departments. It is very helpful that there is such strong alignment on issues such as providing 12 years of quality education worldwide. The Department for International Development does so much in terms of education worldwide, and that can now be amplified throughout the entire Foreign Office network.

- Q4 **Chair:** Given your comments on the importance of bringing the jobs together, which I totally understand, isn't there therefore an argument for bringing the Departments together?

Harriett Baldwin: There is a very strong argument for the Departments to work closely together, but it is incredibly helpful to have separate Departments with separate budgets and separate priorities. It is also incredibly important that the Department for International Development, in particular, works incredibly closely with not only the Foreign Office but all other relevant Departments. I am pleased to say that we certainly do that.

- Q5 **Mr Seely:** On that point, I do not want to be pejorative or too negative, but in the past 10 years we have had an underfunded FCO and a bloated DFID. One has too little money to spend, and the other arguably spends a great deal of money often very badly, chasing spending targets rather than delivering effect. Do you think that is still the case, because many people have said that it has been the case in the past?

Harriett Baldwin: We all agree that it is very important that all Government Departments spend the taxpayers' money that is allocated to them incredibly wisely and carefully. It is always important to ensure that public spending has the right impact and the maximum possible impact. Both Departments are rightly focused on that.

In terms of Africa and my portfolio—I do not particularly want to be drawn into wider policy issues—my view, from the teamwork that I have seen on the ground in the different countries that I have visited so far, is very much that it is one UK team on the ground. In the local country the perception is very much that it is "the UK", and the UK's presence in the country. From that point of view, people do not really blur things on the spectrum from hard to soft power, in terms of our engagement around the world.

I fully support being incredibly careful about how we spend that money, and ensuring that we have the right allocation of funding not only to do the important work that the British public have voted for, in terms of all the major political parties committing to the 0.7% legally for overseas development assistance, but to ensure that we have the right resources and that we focus on how we can aspire to the long-term goal that we all share, which is to eliminate extreme poverty around the world, work with



HOUSE OF COMMONS

countries on economic development, and ensure that the UK is fully involved in trying to resolve peace processes.

- Q6 **Mr Seely:** Do you think that the 0.7% that Britain spends will alleviate global poverty? I would have thought that international capitalism is doing a much better job of that, isn't it?

Harriett Baldwin: They are one and the same thing in my view. It is important that we have, as we do within the Department for International Development, a strong focus on economic development. Look at the way that countries over the last 10, 15 or 20 years have made such strong strides out of poverty. That does not mean that there are not parts of the world where it still persists. We are absolutely right, as a country, to be prepared to step in and help when crises, famines and so on occur around the world. Of course, it has to be linked into an aspiration, which we have with every country that we work with, that we work towards, as I think the President of Ghana put it very well, "beyond aid"—working towards a situation in which trade, prosperity and the links that we have developed with those countries means that we move into middle-income and then higher-income countries.

- Q7 **Mr Seely:** So you think we have got the balance of spending right between DFID and the FCO. Even with your immediate predecessors, I have heard stories that we have had FCO goals in a country that have been completely unrelated to the spending of very large sums of aid money through that Government, yet we have made no call on that Government. While they are receiving very considerable amounts of money from DFID, they have frankly been ignoring an FCO agenda. You are saying that no longer happens, despite the fact that I was told that it was happening very recently—I am wary of giving specific examples.

Harriett Baldwin: I do not think I said that. I think I said that it is very valuable that the roles are combined, and that we can focus on the important humanitarian work that we will do in countries. I completely agree that very often where we find the most extreme poverty is where we find that there is the most work to do in terms of promoting the values of democracy, human rights and ensuring that, from a policy perspective, we are fully engaged with any peace-keeping operations, or any United Nations operations that are occurring in that country.

Of course we will always keep everything we do under review, in terms of whether that is the appropriate balance at any particular point in time, but it is a spectrum where the UK needs to engage in both those areas. Specifically on the 0.7%, it is for the International Development Committee to scrutinise what we do there, but I think everyone would agree that, in terms of the sustainable development goals that the UK and so many countries around the world have signed up to, we are very much in a situation where the amount that needs to be done to achieve those goals means that we are still a long way from feeling confident that we will hit them by 2030, which, after all, is only 12 years away.

- Q8 **Priti Patel:** Bob asked you about spending, but specifically you have



HOUSE OF COMMONS

referred to the one Government approach, which is all fine, but can I ask about influence? Where do you think the axis of influence lies across your joint remit? As much as there is one team, one HMG, my understanding is that in some countries—I have seen it myself—DFID has a larger footprint than the Foreign Office, and with it a degree more influence, because of the level of access it has, particularly in Africa. Can you comment on that?

Harriett Baldwin: It will very much vary country by country. The Committee will be aware of the important work that the BBC World Service does, for example. As you know, we support that from the Foreign Office budget; the BBC's roll-out of language services in a range of languages such as pidgin, Yoruba and—what is the language they speak in Eritrea?

Neil Wigan: Igbo.

Harriett Baldwin: Igbo is spoken in Nigeria. I am stumping my officials on this one. That is an important area of influence that we have been right to emphasis and expand. You will know from your experience when you were Secretary of State how the level of influence, as you rightly point out, will vary depending on the situation with the Government: how aligned what we are doing is with the Government's priorities in that particular country. There may be a range of countries where we have a very different point of view. It is probably worth answering on a case-by-case basis. For the record, it is Tigrinya that is spoken in Eritrea, as of course you will all know. ¹

Q9 Priti Patel: The point about influence comes back to the issue that DFID invests a great deal in countries that are developing, particularly poor countries in Africa, which provides access and influence in system strengthening, for example in health or education systems. You are the woman in the door with many Governments, so how are you using your influence, particularly in DFID, to bring in the Foreign Office agenda? You are looking at human rights, but also the rule of law and property rights, to get these Governments to move into that development agenda—not always on their terms—which will lead to a more holistic policy so that they can move from dependency to greater stability as a country and as a nation.

Harriett Baldwin: You will know better than anyone that it depends on the country. I will take a specific example and talk about Zimbabwe, where we are at an historic point. The UK's view is that we have taken a very clear-sighted approach from the foreign policy political side of things: to go in and engage with the new Government, to send a clear message that we expect free and fair elections and that we welcome the commitment to that and to having a wider set of election observers than there have been previously. I imagine that we were helped to be first in

¹ Clarification from witness: "It should be clarified that services are also being offered (again as of Sep 2017) in Amharic and Afaan Oromo, focussed on reaching audiences in both Ethiopia and Eritrea".



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the door with that message, owing to the fact that we have had that protracted presence in the country, because we have had such a wide range of DFID programmes. I think that has helped us. The two things are a way of demonstrating how we are able then to engage and get across clearly the foreign policy messages that we want to land in that particular country.

Q10 Mike Gapes: Before we move on, I have a question about the relationship between the two Departments at official level. It would be fair to say that from its inception the internal ideological coherence of people working within DFID was different from that of those working within the FCO, and that tension was always there. How are you working to ensure that, at levels lower than permanent secretaries, senior officials or Ministers, there is a one-Government approach?

Harriett Baldwin: That is a great question. Obviously, almost every meeting that I am involved in internally will have people from both Departments; there is an integrated approach in almost every meeting. I have to start by asking, "Which part of the wider organisation are you from?" I will bring in my officials here because they can speak about how it feels to them. What I perceive is that the working has become very integrated and there are no surprises between the different Departments. There is quite a lot of movement between the two. Certainly in-country there is an enormous one-team approach. I will bring in my officials to comment specifically on how they have seen things change.

Donal Brown: We have a joint ministerial office that runs through both Departments, which makes it much easier to come together. The three Africa directors—Neil, myself and my counterpart—cover west and southern Africa and meet on a weekly basis. I have worked with Neil in four previous positions. From what the Minister said, there is a lot more interchange between Departments. Currently there are a number of FCO officials who now work in the DFID Africa team and vice versa across the system. There is a lot more interchange than there was previously. Having one ministerial office makes a big difference in bringing together the two cultures.

Neil Wigan: To add to that, we have three joint units working on Africa covering Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria. Those are across-Whitehall units, but particularly joint DFID and FCO. I chair a director-level group across Whitehall, so not just DFID and the Foreign Office. Membership is from groups such as the NCA, the Home Office, DIT and the MOD, to make sure we work in a joint way. At post we encourage people to work together as closely as possible across Departments, as the Minister says. The Government of Zimbabwe do not particularly care which bit of the British Government we come from; they care that you come from the British Government, so we get the teams to work closely together. In Africa we now have four or five heads of mission who were previously working in DFID, so they bring all that development experience, culture and knowledge with them. As Donal says, we have interchange going the other way. We value the separate departmental cultures, but we try to ensure that we have people who can work on both sides.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q11 Mike Gapes: Minister, your responsibilities include international crime.

Harriett Baldwin: I am not responsible for international crime.

Q12 Mike Gapes: I hope not. Nobody is, apparently. What priority areas are there for you within that heading?

Harriett Baldwin: In terms of the Foreign Secretary's priorities this year, as you know he has put a particular emphasis on the illegal wildlife trade. The UK is hosting a summit in October here in London on that particular aspect of international crime. But, as I saw for myself when I was in Côte d'Ivoire, where we have a very close working relationship on tackling the illegal wildlife trade, it is closely aligned to all other kinds of illegal activity, whether drugs or people smuggling—any lucrative and nefarious activity is very much aligned with that. It involves, as you will know, working very closely with the Prime Minister's newly appointed anti-corruption champion, John Penrose, as well as a significant amount of work within both Departments, and of course working closely with the Home Office, specifically on funding a range of posts, including across Africa.

Q13 Mike Gapes: Last month the Foreign Secretary said that there was a consultation about the total ban on ivory. When does that end? When are we expecting the decision?

Harriett Baldwin: That is a DEFRA consultation, which I understand has ended. They just recently closed that consultation. I would imagine that they are going through the responses and will respond in due course.

Q14 Mike Gapes: That won't be a Foreign Office announcement then; it will be an announcement from DEFRA.

Harriett Baldwin: It is a DEFRA lead, in terms of the UK rules.

Q15 Mike Gapes: Is that imminent?

Harriett Baldwin: The phrase they use in ministerial speak is "in due course."

Q16 Mike Gapes: Not even "shortly." Okay. There was an anti-corruption conference in December 2016. What follow-up has there been since? Given the topicality, with "McMafia" and all the other things that are going on, what are we going to be doing on corruption generally?

Harriett Baldwin: There is a massive amount of follow-up. There are huge spreadsheets with all of the things that are progressing and being checked off. Not all of them are DFID or FCO responsibilities, but for the ones that are, important work is going on there. We are going to be working very closely with John Penrose in his new role—

Q17 Mike Gapes: To be clear then: although you have ministerial responsibility for international crime, there are other individuals at different levels. Who has overall responsibility in Government for dealing with this?

Harriett Baldwin: I suppose I take responsibility for making sure that the international aspects of it that are part of DFID and the FCO's work are



HOUSE OF COMMONS

correctly co-ordinated. Some of the NCA posts that I mentioned are funded through the DFID budget. I get regular updates on the things we are doing to move forward on that.

Q18 Mike Gapes: But at ministerial level, which Department is the overall lead Department on this?

Harriett Baldwin: The Foreign Office is the overall lead Department on international crime, as far as things transnationally are happening. In terms of the internal wirings, the Home Office, through the NCA, has taken more of a lead recently.

Q19 Mike Gapes: Have you got some kind of organogram that you can send us about who does what and where they fit in?

Harriett Baldwin: Absolutely.

Q20 Mike Gapes: That would be very helpful. Thank you. You mentioned trafficking. What are the Government doing to prevent trafficking?

Harriett Baldwin: Again, that is very much something that needs to be looked at not only in its entirety but in terms of specific countries. In particular within Africa, there will be specific routes being used that we are particularly concerned about. The overall approach on a crime that is very much cross-border then gets tied together, in terms of our overall working, both internally and with the Home Office.

Chair: Mike, can I let Ian jump in?

Mike Gapes: I have one further question for afterwards, but Ian can get in now.

Q21 Ian Austin: Thank you, Chair. On the question of corruption, given the widespread suspicion that Russia is now a gangster economy—an organised kleptocracy—is there not a strong case for the Foreign Office and your ministerial colleagues in the Home Office and the Treasury to do much more on that and consider much more carefully the case for visa bans and asset freezes to prevent corrupt Russians, people who have stolen a lot of money in Russia or people who are responsible for human rights abuses in Russia, coming to London and investing their ill-gotten gains here? What do you say to that argument?

Harriett Baldwin: May I, through the Chair, make sure we don't restrict this to talking about Russia, and widen it to the wide range of countries where—

Chair: I think we can recognise the relevance of the questions.

Q22 Ian Austin: Given the topicality, I would like to ask specifically about Russia.

Harriett Baldwin: Given the topicality, you have got the Foreign Secretary coming to talk to you next week.

Chair: We do, on the 21st.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q23 Ian Austin: But you have a responsibility for the Foreign Office's work in respect of international crime.

Harriett Baldwin: Indeed. As the Committee will know, it is something on which we have wider powers than we used to. Working across Government, we brought in the new tool of the unexplained wealth order.

Q24 Chair: We haven't yet used any of them on any foreign citizens, have we?

Harriett Baldwin: My understanding is that we have. One of the issues is the extent to which we make it public. It is not for me to make it public.

Chair: Right, okay. That may be why I was under the illusion that we haven't.

Q25 Mr Seely: In your opinion, should they be made public?

Harriett Baldwin: In my personal opinion, there is certainly a case for the deterrent effect of publicity. Again, that should be looked at on a case-by-case basis, but I would have thought that there would be a strong benefit in many cases of it being public.

Q26 Ian Austin: This is very interesting, because I didn't know they had been used at all. I am not sure I can see why you wouldn't name individuals, but even if you decided not to do that, why would you not want to say that unexplained wealth orders have been used and on how many occasions they have been used? Why wouldn't you want to do that?

Harriett Baldwin: As I mentioned to your colleague, in certain cases there would be a lot of public value in making it public that they have been used. Neil, do you want to add anything?

Neil Wigan: I think the implementation in the UK is probably more a Home Office lead. They would lead on the technical detail of it.

Q27 Mr Seely: I am aware that you have done something on this issue, but a lot of people are incredibly underwhelmed by the lack of action on transparency issues. You say, "It's not my patch," but you are the Minister responsible. You say it is with the Home Office, but I am bemused that offshore centres are allowed to drag their heels, and I see no good reason why we are planning to water down potential Magnitsky Acts in this country. We should be working very closely with the US on sanctions lists—not only for Russia but for a lot of very questionable people who come and launder their money through London. I cannot, for the life of me, see why it is in the British state's interests for us to be so slow with anti-corruption and transparency measures, and to be following other people, rather than setting a lead. I would really like to hear your opinion, in plain English, about why that is.

Harriett Baldwin: I disagree with the premise of the question. I think the UK has shown a lot of leadership on this, starting with the anti-corruption summit. I think we have shown a lot of leadership at the G20 level and in terms of disclosure and transparency in relation to beneficiaries. I agree that we have not yet fully explored all the different ways in which we can continue on this journey. I fully respect—although others on the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Committee may disagree with me—that for overseas territories it should be a process of working with the overseas territories rather than legislating for them.

Q28 **Mr Seely:** Thank you very much indeed for that answer. Why are we delaying the production of transparency?

Harriett Baldwin: Can you be specific about what it is we are delaying?

Q29 **Mr Seely:** We are putting back beneficial ownership transparency until 2022.

Harriett Baldwin: I think we have brought in—

Chair: I am actually a supporter of Bob's on the transparency question, but I am going to stop that line of questioning, for the simple reason that you are not answering about transparency; you are answering about international corruption. I get the connection. Mike, I am going to bring you back in.

Q30 **Mike Gapes:** Thank you. I was about to complete my questioning. I have one area I want to raise with you. We are taking initiatives—you touched on this—to reduce undocumented migration out of Africa and into Europe. There are people who are concerned that some of the countries from which the people are fleeing have very poor human rights records. Eritrea, which is a major source of migrants to Europe, has compulsory indefinite national service. Our Committee had a hearing in the last Parliament about the absolutely appalling human rights position there. Is there not a danger that we may be assisting some pretty unsavoury security forces in some of those countries through the way we approach these issues? Could human rights abuses be an unintended consequence of what we do to push people back?

Harriett Baldwin: I certainly would not want to say to this Committee that there are never any unintended consequences of any actions the UK takes in the world. That would be a ridiculously sweeping statement. Of course we have incredibly careful processes, in every single country in which we work, to do a very rigorous assessment of the security and human rights situation. As the Committee knows, we look very closely at every country on a case-by-case basis. Often it will be down to UK judicial processes to decide on a case-by-case basis.

Q31 **Mike Gapes:** So would you accept that concern, which relates not to an individual country but to the Khartoum process? Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Eritrea are involved in that relationship. Is that recognised within the FCO and DFID?

Harriett Baldwin: Absolutely. There is a very rigorous process and a way of assessing the risk in each country, particularly with regard to human rights. It is something that we keep scrutinised, updated and refreshed on a continuous basis, because it is such an important and sensitive area. I can point to examples where we have thought very long and hard about how we best deliver. For example, there were problems in Somalia with people who had left al-Shabaab and were being rehabilitated, as the

Committee will be aware. Some human rights and child protection issues were brought to the UK's attention. We have had to go back to first principles, reassess how we are delivering that and correct it.

Will we shy away from trying to work to improve security for people on the ground in countries where we are taking what we would classify as a red risk in terms of security? I do not think we should shy away from that. We should continue to be wide-eyed and clear-sighted about what we are doing, but try to improve the security situation in a range of different countries where we feel that that is very much related to the UK interest. It is a very rigorous process.

Q32 Ann Clwyd: Minister, your responsibilities include consular policy. What exactly does that entail? Will you flesh it out a bit?

Harriett Baldwin: Of course. Some 70 million British citizens travel overseas every year—obviously a lot of them more than once—and we support them around the world with a consular support network that amounts to almost 800 people. The work that we do is very much focused on ensuring that the key messages get out about preventing UK citizens from coming to harm. The main tool for that is publishing real-time advice, which we encourage everyone to take into account when deciding where to travel. We also encourage people to take the precaution of taking out travel insurance to cover the worst possible outcomes, and we ensure that we are able to dedicate consular support to the most vulnerable UK nationals abroad, whether they are in prison or have got ensnared in the court system in some way. The consular service is there to help them with that. It is available to all UK citizens 24 hours a day, seven days a week, everywhere in the world.

Q33 Ann Clwyd: I am tempted to say that the one time I ever needed it myself, the consul was celebrating the Queen's birthday, so consular services were not available. I will not talk about the individual place, but that caused me considerable difficulty. I am curious that we were told that you have responsibility not for services or individual consular cases, but rather for the higher-level strategic approach to consular activity. Is that how you see it?

Harriett Baldwin: No. Certainly, a number of the cases that I would put into that "most vulnerable" category get a lot of engagement from Ministers and from the Foreign Secretary.

Q34 Ann Clwyd: I am curious that the FCO told us that, because I do not know what it means. Surely your work is informed by individual casework.

Harriett Baldwin: It is. Let me clarify exactly the phrase you are referring to. For example, although the overall policy across the whole network would fall under this ministerial portfolio, the specific consular cases are then allocated by geography. So I would focus more on the African cases and my colleagues would focus on other geographical areas. That is perhaps what the sentence is referring to there.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q35 **Ann Clwyd:** Right, so there is no dispute, is there, between DFID and the FCO?

Harriett Baldwin: No. This is exclusively an FCO responsibility.

Q36 **Ann Clwyd:** On the challenges ahead as we perceive them, for example the World Cup in Russia, given the increasing strains on our ties with that country, and past violence between English and Russian supporters, how are you going to deal with that? Do you have contingency plans?

Harriett Baldwin: The consular advice is that we recommend that people check Foreign Office travel advice before booking a ticket to see World Cup matches in Russia. In addition, we recommend that everyone who is going on one of these trips—indeed, any trip around the world—considers taking out travel insurance.

Chair: There is more to this question than travel insurance.

Q37 **Ann Clwyd:** Depending on what happens over the next 24 to 48 hours, I would have expected that you would give some firm advice to people planning to travel to Russia.

Harriett Baldwin: My firm advice is to consult what is on the Foreign Office advice website.

Q38 **Mr Seely:** On this point, there have been occasions in the past when Russian politicians have talked about football hooligans, almost as though they were something to be proud of, almost as though they were part of the Russian state, in a slightly weird, national, patriot kind of way. Are you monitoring that? If you believe there is a risk that English football fans will be specifically targeted by Russian thugs, under a guise of fighting back for Russia, or something like that, will you be highlighting that? Are you monitoring that? Are you taking that as a potential serious threat, because some of these Russian football hooligans really are quite violent?

Harriett Baldwin: I can assure the Committee that the Foreign Office travel advice will take into account all the characteristics. There is a specific set of travel advice for Russia and the World Cup. There is a campaign called "Be on the Ball", which gives additional information that England football fans will find useful.

Q39 **Ian Austin:** This is not like British businessmen or women going to Russia for a meeting, or students going on holiday travelling around. Given the widespread violence of the European championships, which many suspect was organised—and there was evidence that it was organised by the state—surely English football fans going to Russia face a much more serious level of threat. That has to be something that the Foreign Office takes into account. Will you be devoting extra staff to consular services in Russia during the World Cup to support English fans who could well be in danger?

Harriett Baldwin: The Foreign Office has put a great deal of extra work into the consular support that will go with this particular tournament. The



HOUSE OF COMMONS

travel advice is always kept current and there is this specific additional campaign called "Be on the Ball". We would recommend that fans follow that particular campaign and the advice that it gives.

- Q40 **Ann Clwyd:** Do you anticipate that Brexit will affect the consular support requirements of UK citizens living in the EU?

Harriett Baldwin: With the UK's decision to leave the EU, we will continue what we currently offer to UK citizens, which is access to consular services everywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Q41 **Andrew Rosindell:** Is that for UK citizens?

Harriett Baldwin: Yes.

- Q42 **Andrew Rosindell:** But why would that be affected by Brexit anyway?

Harriett Baldwin: Exactly, and I said we will continue to offer it.

- Q43 **Chair:** On the consular question, will you be devoting extra consulate resources to Russia for the potential movement of people at the World Cup?

Harriett Baldwin: We will be devoting the right level of consular resources, yes. I can assure the Committee of that.

- Q44 **Mike Gapes:** On Russia, during the European championships in Spain a few years ago, there was some serious violence that involved Russian fans. Taking up Bob Seely's point, we have a list and we prevent people travelling if they have convictions or are known to be involved in violence and hooliganism. We have the powers from previous years to take away passports during the duration of the World Cup. The problem will be that there will be people with no bad intentions whatsoever going genuinely to football, who will be in a very vulnerable position. Can you assure us that the security and intelligence services will do a proper assessment of the nature of the threat that British fans may experience when they are going to support our teams?

Harriett Baldwin: I can assure the Committee that an extensive amount of planning and bespoke planning for this particular event has gone into the travel advice, which is kept current. There is a specific section on the 2018 World Cup tournament and a specific campaign for fans to look at, which is the "Be on the Ball" campaign.

- Q45 **Priti Patel:** Mike has touched on this. On the World Cup, are the security and intelligence services informing contingency planning and the preparatory work that is taking place in the Foreign Office to ensure, as you have said, that there will be the right level of consular support and service provision? Should there be some of the incidents that Mike referred to, where British fans are subject to unprovoked violence that then starts to escalate, what kind of practical measures have you got in place to give assurance to fans? What are the security and intelligence services doing to work with you and your teams to ensure that everything that we do will protect British citizens who are travelling?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Harriett Baldwin: We have done an extensive amount of preparatory work, which has involved work across Whitehall. It will inform what will always be, on our website, the most up-to-date advice. We want fans to have a trouble-free visit to the World Cup matches and we do recommend that people take out travel insurance wherever they are travelling in the world.

- Q46 **Priti Patel:** On that point, if there is a problem—orchestrated violence that escalates immediately—will you set up crisis centres and hotlines? What type of practical things do you have in the locker?

Harriett Baldwin: There is a lot of resilience planning for incidents of whatever kind around the world, as the Committee well knows. A lot of thought, preparation and planning has gone into this as a major event, just as it would go into a range of other possible scenarios.

- Q47 **Mr Seely:** You say that there has been more planning; can you give us any idea of the person power that has been put behind that? Have you seconded other people? What sort of numbers of extra personnel working on this are we talking about?

Harriett Baldwin: There has been a range of different activities. In preparing for any major event there will be the potential to ramp up the involvement needed at any particular point in time. There have been dedicated individuals, as there would be with any major international event, involved in the planning for this particular event, making sure that travel advice is up to date.

- Q48 **Ian Austin:** To put it in plain English, are you sending extra staff to Russia to support football fans at the World cup?

Harriett Baldwin: I am pretty sure that we will be sending extra people to Russia. If the Committee has such a level of curiosity about the exact number, I can follow up with a letter to the Chair.

Chair: Thanks very much.

- Q49 **Priti Patel:** Can we move back to Africa, and give you the chance to talk about your work on Africa? There are a number of strands that I want to follow. On your strategy for Africa across the two Departments, could you very succinctly describe the work that you have taking place? What is Her Majesty's Government's strategy for Africa, in terms of DFID and the Foreign Office? Where are the points of influence on which you in particular hold the reins?

Harriett Baldwin: The starting point is that for the UK as a whole, Africa really matters. If we look forward, as we try to be prescient on these things, we can see that Africa will grow in importance for the UK over the decades ahead. In terms of the priorities, the DFID portfolio is tackling extreme poverty. As you and anyone will know, we will focus a lot of our resources on the very poorest, but we will also be working towards those major strategic development goals, including the goal that eventually will go beyond aid and will work its way out of extreme poverty in all areas. That has to be a coherent part of our work, whether that is our working



HOUSE OF COMMONS

directly on humanitarian relief or, more recently and led by you, increasing the amount that we allocate to CDC to make investments.

Where the UK can particularly differentiate itself in terms of the work that it does with Africa is the trade and the prosperity angle. The UK is the meeting point for the pools of capital from around the world that meet the interesting investments. We should make the most of that with regard to the inward investment that African economies want to see.

There is an incredibly important strand around the Foreign Office work, too, in particular around some of the political peace processes that we are trying to take forward. You will know from your visits to Somalia that that is a country where we have seen real progress, but we really have to make sure that we are relentless in continuing that progress. Other countries in Africa are greater challenges. Again, we have to be relentless with the levers that we have both bilaterally and at the United Nations in trying to move forward on the political processes.

- Q50 Priti Patel:** You have touched on economic, humanitarian and political priorities. The Foreign Office has a big strategy for Global Britain. Where does Africa sit in that strategy and what are the key outcomes that would be deemed a success from an Africa perspective? What outcomes will you champion?

Harriett Baldwin: Clearly, in terms of the Department for International Development work, the macro outcome has to be the progress that we can measure towards the sustainable development goals and their achievement in each of those countries, and the road to prosperity and security in those countries. The outcomes will be along that road, whether it is in the work that we do on education or on resilience to climate change and so on. There is a highly measurable set of things that we are trying to deliver through the international development budget. On the Foreign Office side of things, it would be continuing to make measurable progress on those peace processes: for example, the high-level working group discussions in South Sudan and the key role that the UK plays there, and ensuring that that is as inclusive a peace process as possible.

- Q51 Priti Patel:** Where would key Government priorities such as human trafficking and foreign national offenders sit on that spectrum, because clearly it goes across not only two Departments, but other Departments? They are both the Prime Minister's priorities as well. She has said that she wants major changes. Have you been pressing this issue with the African Governments that you have visited? If so, which ones and what are their responses? This is all part of Global Britain and how we are driving key outcomes and influencing Governments directly.

Harriett Baldwin: The discussions on those specific strands, which are, as you say, cross-Government strands, inform some of the actions that we have taken: for example, the increase that we put into our efforts with regard to the Sahel recently at the UK-France summit, or the increase in the efforts that we are putting into working with the Nigerian Government in the north-east, where you were able to visit in your previous role. It is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

very much at the forefront. In fact, one of my priorities in Africa, in addition to the work that we emphasise in our overall work on trade and prosperity in Africa, was the incredibly important work that we have done on violence against women and preventing sexual violence in conflict. We have worked with an African-led movement to tackle female genital mutilation, so there is a lot of really important work there that we highlight.

Q52 Priti Patel: On the Africa strategy, is it finalised and will it be published?

Harriett Baldwin: The NSC has been very happy with the work that you will have kicked off and been involved in. It is not, as the Committee will know, normal practice to publish NSC strategies specifically, but I am happy to have highlighted the important work there on the security, prosperity and humanitarian strands, and the growing importance of the UK Government's African partnerships.

Q53 Priti Patel: We totally understand the National Security Council perspective, but will those key elements be published alongside or incorporated within the wider Global Britain strategy information that is put out in the public domain?

Harriett Baldwin: It would very much be information that could be gleaned from the public domain in terms of the range of different announcements that we make and the transparency that we give to the British public about where we spend money.

Q54 Priti Patel: Can I just ask about trade envoys?

Chair: Go on then.

Priti Patel: Trade envoys for economic development, which is a key part of the Africa work that you have touched on, are mission-critical in supporting Britain's place in the world, UK investment and so on. It is a competitive landscape in Africa. How are the trade envoys supported in their objectives and their work by both Departments, and by the embassies in-country? Do they support them practically? Do they facilitate meetings for them? Are they working alongside their agenda of key deliverables?

Harriett Baldwin: I am a huge fan of our trade envoys, in particular the trade envoy work that I have seen happening in Africa. It is not just the two Departments but the Department for International Trade. There is a lot of great work and I hear very positive feedback in my meetings both with the envoys and with post, in terms of the support they get and the impact they are able to have when they come into a country as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to country X.

Q55 Priti Patel: What kind of support do they get—before they come into a country, setting up meetings and so on—and how formal are their roles? Are they formalised roles that contribute to the work of Government, or is this the work of individuals, making their own contacts, some facilitated through embassies? How do those roles work in practical terms?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Harriett Baldwin: In practical terms, we offer whatever level of briefing, help and support that they want, at this end and then in-country at the other end. Often they bring in contacts, information and access that we have not previously had any information about, so it is reinforcing from that point of view.

- Q56 **Ann Clwyd:** On the concept of Global Britain, the memorandum states that the UK seeks security, stability and prosperity for Africa, but it does not mention human rights. How would that be spelled out more clearly in the memorandum?

Harriett Baldwin: I would wholeheartedly endorse Global Britain and the values that Global Britain stands for, which have got to include human rights, multi-party democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech and so on. I am not entirely sure which particular memorandum you are referring to. Which particular memorandum are you reading from?

Chair: The Global Britain memorandum that came out only a few days ago. You sent it to us 10 days ago, I believe.

- Q57 **Ann Clwyd:** Perhaps you would like to insert that into the memorandum, if possible.

Harriett Baldwin: I will certainly insert back that the Committee supports that.

- Q58 **Chair:** Yes, it does. May I build on that? One of the important bits of work we have been doing on human rights in Africa, which is perhaps less obvious, is training teams. We have done very important work in Nigeria, with the Nigerian military, as a result of attacks in the north-east, and we are now doing important work in other parts of Africa. I will not name more of them, because I am not clear which ones are public and which ones are not—but I am aware that we are doing a lot of work. Will you confirm that that is an area you are discussing very closely with the relevant MOD Minister, and an area which you are seeking to continue and to increase co-operation in?

Harriett Baldwin: I can confirm that. As someone who was until recently in the Ministry of Defence, it is obviously a great opportunity to continue working closely with the teams there. As the Committee knows, it was a commitment in the strategic defence and security review to double UK involvement, for example in peacekeeping missions, and that has been achieved. We have increased our presence in peacekeeping missions in African countries. The most significant of those is the mission in South Sudan, but of course there are also important missions in other countries, to which, as the Committee rightly points out, there is an important training element. I regularly meet with the Minister for the Armed Forces to share our thoughts about the best way to take that forward. The most recent announcement was the one made at the UK-France summit about providing three Chinooks to work with the French in the Sahel.

- Q59 **Chair:** The support to the French in the Sahel is a bit different, because that is military aid to an equal power—indeed, a very close ally. Given the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

importance, which you quite rightly identified, of security in places like South Sudan, would you agree that groups like the Royal Engineers, when they do their important work, are essential to the human rights of the community they are serving?

Harriett Baldwin: I really would. It is really important that UK troops go through rigorous training, as far as human rights and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse are concerned. That will enable them to have a disproportionate impact, in terms of being able to train other troop-providing countries.

Q60 **Chair:** Given the roles they then accomplish, including building the first levels of security and thereby allowing civil society to start, would you agree that they are an essential element of civil society and development?

Harriett Baldwin: Would I believe that armed forces are an essential element—

Chair: Would you agree that security is an essential part of civil society and development?

Harriett Baldwin: I think you will never be able to develop a strong economy without security for your citizens. Of course I believe that.

Q61 **Chair:** Okay. Given the fact that, as you agree, security underpins civil society and development, would you agree that it should logically come out of the development budget?

Harriett Baldwin: I think that a lot of the development budget will go into a range of different things that help the security of the country.

Q62 **Chair:** But, interestingly, not training programmes of the nature we are talking about in South Sudan, Nigeria and many other places, where, as you agree, the military are providing the essential building block for the growth of civil society and development.

Harriett Baldwin: When I was a Defence Minister, I made sure everything we were doing that could potentially come out of the official development assistance budget—

Q63 **Chair:** When you were a Defence Minister, you agreed with my argument, but now you are a DFID Minister, you don't.

Harriett Baldwin: Now I am a DFID Minister, I welcome the fact that we have so many programmes that help with security through our joint work, and that the Secretary of State and the Defence Secretary have launched work on further areas where we can co-operate. We continue to take up the work of the previous Secretary of State for International Development on exploring ways in which the fairly rigid rules on official development assistance can be made to reflect the important premise that underpins your comments.

Chair: I think I am right in saying that the previous Secretary of State agreed with my argument, and argued against it in various forums,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

including the OECD. I seem to remember that argument happening. Bob, did you want to come in very briefly?

Mr Seely: I don't know whether this is the right place for it, but I was just going to ask the Minister about her opinion of Global Britain. Are we doing that now? Are you happy to have that question now?

Chair: Go for it.

- Q64 **Mr Seely:** Global Britain seems to be a very catchy term. It is potentially very interesting, and it may communicate quite a lot. What does it mean to you? Do you believe we are filling in the detail of what Global Britain is? What does it consist of?

Harriett Baldwin: Global Britain to me takes us on the full spectrum from hard power to soft power. We are the only G20 country that spends more than 2% on defence and 0.7% on international development assistance. In addition to that, we have one of the world's most spoken languages and one of the world's most respected broadcasters. In the most recent soft power index, we came second. To me, Global Britain is partly that, but very importantly it is also the values that go with the work we do overseas and around the world. They are the values of human rights, the rule of law, free speech and gender equality—all the values that inform the work we do around the world.

So Global Britain to me means making the most of that spectrum, respecting the fact that we are one of the lead voices in the world. The strategic threat outlined in the strategic defence and security review was of increased erosion in terms of the international rules-based system, and the UK is a vociferous ally of the international rules-based system. That is what it means to me.

- Q65 **Chair:** On that, China's presence in the African continent has led to enormous amounts of opportunity but also raised some challenges. Does the volume of trade come at a cost of human rights and good governance, or can the two go together?

Harriett Baldwin: There are really two parts to that question. Obviously there are lots of other countries involved in trading across Africa. We are but one of them—

Chair: Sure, but the volume of Chinese trade is overwhelming.

Harriett Baldwin: Clearly, in terms of China and the role they play, there will be times when our objectives are aligned and times when they are competing. It is important to find the times when we are collaborating in terms of objectives and working together. It is important to recognise that, in global trade, it is very much a win-win game. The more that we can expand and ease those barriers, the better it is.

The Committee rightly raises what I think has been quite a challenge in terms of the narrative I just outlined to Bob: many countries can now point to China and say, "Look how they have prospered without having to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

put up with the inconveniences of respecting human rights and multi-party democracy”—the things we hold dear. They can point to that as an alternative approach to the prosperity of their citizens. But that should just invigorate the strength with which we put those views across and stand up for our values in how we are perceived around the world.

- Q66 **Priti Patel:** What is your understanding of how the United Kingdom is perceived in Africa, particularly in light of China? China's policy is one of tying their aid, so they ship their labour force to Africa to participate in development schemes such as road building and construction. But it is not just China out there. There are other European countries—Germany, famously, and Macron from France—and other countries such as India and Israel who have huge development partnerships and footprints. Other than for money through DFID, do African Governments and heads of state take us seriously when it comes to the agenda of trade, investment and prosperity as well as foreign policy?

Harriett Baldwin: I would add Turkey to that list as well. The UK is very much welcomed as being a country that stands for the values that I outlined. The reception I have received since we took the decision to leave the European Union is one of, "Great, that means that we can do more business with you. We can look at that as a trade opportunity." That is how it seems to have been perceived in terms of our trading partners across Africa.

Obviously, administrative processes need to be gone through to ensure that we move to a position where we are at least as good as we are now in terms of the economic partnership arrangements we have through the European Union, but people see that as an opportunity, and they totally get what we bring to the table in being that meeting place for global finance.

Do I think that we get the best value from our "UK brand" by confusing it through delivering so much through the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the UN and the CDC, which no one would particularly perceive as being a UK brand? No, I think we can do much better by branding it all as part of Team UK/Global Britain and the GREAT campaign. There is a lot more we can do in that regard.

- Q67 **Priti Patel:** Finally, where do you think we are in the queue when it comes to the countries that you and I have just listed, in terms of getting our foot in the door and having some crunchy discussions about investment, trade and jobs? It is pretty clear, by the presence alone of other international leaders who have visited Africa, that they are making hay while the sun shines over there.

Harriett Baldwin: I think we are in a very good position—I haven't perceived any difficulty regarding where we are in the queue. I don't think that the Americans have helped themselves terribly much in recent months, if I may say that. I think that China has had a big impact, as the Chair pointed out, and many countries have seen that that comes with a different set of strings attached and economic impact. There is a huge



HOUSE OF COMMONS

amount that we can do to position the UK as a beacon of free trade economic development and inward investment through the CDC, and also by introducing to other pools of capital around the world the incredible contributions that we have made through all the multilateral organisations and funds. There is more we can do on the branding, and I know that the current Secretary of State is keen on that as well.

- Q68 **Mr Seely:** To follow that up, haven't you just highlighted, very eloquently, the problems? You put money through these people or through those people, but this is about spending to reach a Government target. I would love to know how much some of this spending, worthy as it is, actually helps UK foreign policy objectives. This is about spending to reach a target, not about spending effectively or about UK priorities.

Harriett Baldwin: I completely disagree with that characterisation of what I just said, and I draw your attention to the transparency that exists on the DFID website regarding all the spending and the impact it has. We fully accept that we need to do more in terms of the UK brand across the board, but I strongly refute the suggestion that the spending is not aligned with our overall foreign policy values—I don't know if my colleagues want to come in and say anything on that.

- Q69 **Mr Seely:** I said objectives, not values. It is about specific things rather than a general, "Ooh, let's be nice and do some good." How is it driving foreign policy objectives? It seems to me that we are just spending for a target because that is the political aim we have set ourselves, rather than for values. At the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign Office, every penny spent has to be accounted for and balanced; at DFID, voom, it just spends the cash to hit 0.7%.

Harriett Baldwin: Obviously, DFID money is very rigorously accounted for and transparent. In order to meet the sustainable development goals that the UK has signed up to, we could spend many multiples of our aid budget, given the need around the world. Donal, I don't know if you want to say anything more on that issue, but the spending is entirely consistent with the overall objectives that I outlined, and it is scrutinised very rigorously, as the previous Secretary of State will know.

Donal Brown: To add to that point about scrutiny, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact is completely independent and reports back to the IDC. It is probably, one could say, the only body in the world that is most independent and scrutinises the aid budget. Obviously the Joint Treasury Committee also looks at the size of the spend with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Nearly 30% of the development spend goes through other Government Departments, which also report back through; and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact has scrutiny of all the UK spend, not just DFID's.

Neil Wigan: As examples where DFID spend is clearly linked to UK objectives: if it is promoting economic development in a country that clearly then will create potential for British businesses; where DFID is working to support election processes that feeds into the political



HOUSE OF COMMONS

processes that the Minister was talking about. DFID also is doing some work around security and justice, which, again, brings us to security, which is very closely aligned with our objectives in a country like Somalia. I think there are plenty of cases where you can see a very clear link between the DFID programme and the broader HMG objectives in a particular country.

Chair: Given that point, the FCO memorandum—the one that you seemed to have missed, Minister—forgive me.

Harriett Baldwin: Somehow it wasn't in my pack.

- Q70 **Chair:** Indeed, but we did get it so I am afraid I am going to refer to it, because it was a response by the Foreign Office. It spoke quite clearly. As it said, an immediate task was to use UK development spending to "deliver influence in Africa". I welcome this very much. Is this a change in DFID priorities, in the way that DFID is going to go about its business—that we are now able to use aid for UK influence? It would seem logical that we should.

Harriett Baldwin: I think it goes without saying that UK aid increases influence.

- Q71 **Chair:** That is not quite the same thing as using it to deliver influence. Of course you are right that spending money in somebody else's country increases influence, but can we use it to deliver?

Harriett Baldwin: Again, I would just point to some of the very good examples that my FCO colleague has—

- Q72 **Chair:** Your casuistry does you credit for a Jesuit-trained mind; but the truth is this would be a change in DFID policy. It would be a welcome change for some of us. I am not sure it would be welcomed from everywhere in the Committee, but it would be a welcome change for some of us.

Harriett Baldwin: And you will hear more about this, I am sure, from the Secretary of State, in due course.

- Q73 **Mike Gapes:** Can I take you a bit further on this memorandum? I understand that you have only been a Minister for two months, but when we decided to investigate Global Britain, we asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for a memorandum, and it was basically like pulling teeth. We eventually got one on 1 March. What is significant about that is that the memorandum that has been sent to our Committee emphasises the relationship—the ties—with the United States, the European Union, the Indo-Pacific region, but late on there are just three paragraphs that refer to Africa, and they are not even under an "African" heading, but "other regions". Given the importance of Africa—you have said that—why are we getting the impression, or why could other people get the impression, that actually Africa is not a priority for our Government?

Harriett Baldwin: I am only going to say to that, that we think your Report is very welcome. I believe it is only just published.



Q74 Mike Gapes: It is the first of many; it is an ongoing inquiry.

Chair: It is the introduction, in many ways; we are setting the scene on the basis of what we received from the Foreign Office, so that we can now address different subjects within that theme.

Harriett Baldwin: Okay. As with all Reports that are to do with the Foreign Office, we will reply to that during the time that we are allowed to reply to it, but yes, I am very glad that the Committee is paying such close attention to the work that the Minister for Africa is doing. Certainly, if I had had any hand in drafting this, I would have wanted to see a higher mention in terms of the work that I do, but I can see that I was overruled.

Q75 Mike Gapes: We wish you well. Mention has been made in passing of President Macron. In his first six months in office, he visited Africa eight times. Can you tell me how many times the Prime Minister has visited Africa since she became Prime Minister in 2016?

Harriett Baldwin: I'm not aware that the current Prime Minister has visited Africa recently, but—

Q76 Mike Gapes: I can tell you. She hasn't visited at all.

Harriett Baldwin: The previous Prime Minister visited in 2013, I think, and the current Foreign Secretary has visited Africa something like nine times.

Q77 Mike Gapes: My point is that we have a large number of Anglophone countries in Africa. We have a large number of Commonwealth countries in Africa. France has former colonies and a relationship with many African countries. Some are the same—Cameroon, for example. In essence, it seems to me that the French are taking Africa far more seriously at the highest level of their Government than we are. Will the Prime Minister be making a visit to Africa soon? Will she be making a major speech about Africa?

Harriett Baldwin: I dispute the premise of the question. I know that the Prime Minister is really looking forward to meeting the Heads of Government of the 19 countries that are African and Commonwealth members when they visit the UK for the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit this April.

Q78 Mike Gapes: In London.

Harriett Baldwin: That will be a great opportunity for her to meet all those Heads of Government. Of course, I will always be trying to find ways to persuade the Prime Minister to visit Africa, but I am very happy with the support that the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State provide in terms of the regular engagement that they have on the ground to supplement the travel I am doing.

Mike Gapes: I've made my point.

Q79 Chair: Before you go on, can I ask a supplementary? What sets apart the relationship with our Commonwealth African friends and the other African



nations?

Harriett Baldwin: One of the things that sets apart that relationship is that we tend, through our membership of the Commonwealth, to probably find that there are more opportunities to engage with those particular Governments. The Commonwealth—I am sure you take regular evidence from my colleague, the Minister for the Commonwealth—stands for a range of different values. I know that they are thrilled to have welcomed the 19th new member to the Commonwealth with the return of The Gambia very recently.

Q80 **Chair:** The return of The Gambia is hugely welcome. As you say, there are 19 African states that are members of the Commonwealth. Which ones matter most to us? Where is our prime effort going?

Harriett Baldwin: I would characterise—

Q81 **Chair:** Maybe I can put it another way. If one says that one has 19 priorities, one has none. Where is our priority?

Harriett Baldwin: I would characterise the top economic and prosperity relationships as probably being South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. I think those would be top if you looked at the trade and the range of different things we do with those countries from that point of view. Obviously, if you look at the other end of the spectrum and look at humanitarian budgets, it is exactly almost the obverse. Probably the biggest humanitarian budget is South Sudan, the DRC and Somalia. Those would be the top three. That just shows the ranges in between.

Q82 **Mike Gapes:** We as a Committee were in Paris last week. We had some very good discussions with our counterparts in the Assemblée Nationale and the Senate. We met the Europe Minister and other people. One of the issues that came up was the co-operation between the UK and France in Africa. They are incredibly appreciative of the military support we gave them in Mali. It was timely, when they needed it at the beginning, and was then ongoing. From your assessment, what has been the impact of that co-operation and what lessons have we gained for the future, in terms of our co-operation with France and potentially others?

Harriett Baldwin: I am very impressed with the work in alignment that we do with our French friends in so many areas. Of course, I am familiar with the work we do on the defence side, but clearly we also work very closely with the French on our trade, prosperity and humanitarian work. On the Sahel, we have increased our commitment with a further £50 million contribution and the Chinooks. It is a strong relationship and one that we spend a lot of time working on. The announcement in the summit of the global year of education is also something that we are pleased to be working together with the French on, because we are a significant contributor to the Global Education Fund², as indeed is France. We share so much common ground. I am delighted to be using my very rusty French again, because I am finding it comes in quite handy as I travel around

² Clarification from witness: should read as 'Global Partnership for Education'

Africa. I was able to do that, which is helpful with the French-speaking media and French-speaking countries.

- Q83 **Priti Patel:** I have two questions. First, with the Commonwealth summit taking place next month and 19 African Commonwealth countries being in town, what are your objectives? What are you hoping will be achieved in terms of outcomes from a foreign policy or a DFID perspective through the short engagement during that week, particularly by the Prime Minister? Secondly, are we going to see any new development of foreign policy—signings, MOUs, co-operation agreements—between us and key Commonwealth countries?

Harriett Baldwin: I am sure you will have heard from the Commonwealth Minister all the various different goals for the communiqué, which is still being drafted and worked on with all the different countries that are attending, and the various different initiatives that fall into an overarching theme of youth and young people. One of the powerful things about the Commonwealth is how young it is, and we need to celebrate that future and that new generation. Whether it is on prosperity or on the fairness theme, there are all sorts of different announcements that I know people will be saving up to announce at the time. Lots of things are being worked on that are very much aligned with the Foreign Secretary's priorities. Of course, there is a lot of overlap there with the work we do with DFID, particularly on the education and the environmental side of things.

- Q84 **Andrew Rosindell:** I have a few specific questions. You have said yourself that Nigeria is a very important country for us, and we have a large number of Nigerians who live in the UK, so it is important to our constituents as well. What is the Foreign Office doing to work with the Nigerian Government to defeat Boko Haram? When the Committee was there in the last Parliament—or in fact the Parliament before—in 2013, we took evidence that the UK Government were not really doing much to help the Nigerian Government achieve a military defeat of that horrible terrorist organisation. That rather alarmed many of us who went to Nigeria at the time. Has there been a policy shift now? Are we doing more to work with our Nigerian friends on this matter?

Harriett Baldwin: We certainly hope so. The work we are doing is extensive. Forgive me, but I would not be able to do an A versus B without knowing what A looked like when the Committee visited Nigeria, but we are doing an enormous amount of work on training through MOD colleagues. I think you had the opportunity to go and visit some of the training camps. There is a shared security concern about the impact of Boko Haram in the north-east. I don't know whether the Committee went up to the north-east, but my understanding is that some progress has been made. The UK has been able to help in a range of different ways. We stand willing, should we be asked by the Nigerians, to do more. We also appreciate the progress that has been made, but clearly there is still further work to do.

To give a specific example of some of the additional work that has gone in—probably since the Committee went—in the north of Cameroon, around



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the Lake Chad area, we have recognised that there is effectively a lot of movement across the borders. We have been working to train troops in the north and have made an enormous amount of progress there against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad area.

- Q85 **Chair:** Given that you have just recognised that operation, I recently met some of the officers involved. Can I say how impressed I was by the work that they are doing? It is phenomenal.

Harriett Baldwin: But is there more that we could do? We would be very keen to hear from the Nigerians how we could be more helpful in a range of different ways. We stand ready to help if we are asked for additional assistance.

- Q86 **Andrew Rosindell:** At the time, they felt, as a Commonwealth country, very let down that we were not doing more to assist them. I hope, Minister, you can take that on board and see what we are doing and see if we can help them further.

Harriett Baldwin: Yes. I would be very sorry if they felt that way. I would be keen to hear from them. More schoolgirls were kidnapped a couple of weeks ago. I am keen to hear further specific requests, because we would be very interested.

- Q87 **Andrew Rosindell:** Would you be willing to look into that and perhaps write to the Committee?

Harriett Baldwin: No. I know for sure that nothing further has been requested. We have explored specifically in that area what more we should be doing. We believe we are doing a great deal to help. Short of some areas that I will not go into specifically with the Committee, we have done everything that has been requested. Of course, we would be very keen to find ways in which we could help our Nigerian friends with what is a really worrying security situation.

- Q88 **Andrew Rosindell:** I have a couple of other brief questions, if there is time. Two or three overseas territories are nominally part of the African region. Are they being given priority? DFID is meant to give first call to overseas territories generally but you are dealing with Africa. St Helena is one of them. Do you feel that HMG are doing enough—they are British and not foreign. Are we doing as much as we possibly can to treat them as we would our own constituents if they were on mainland UK? Or do you feel that we should up this a bit and actually give them greater support?

Harriett Baldwin: The Committee will be familiar with the help that we have given in the specific example of St Helena. Of course, we are always very happy to listen to the case for and request for further assistance.

- Q89 **Andrew Rosindell:** How about the runway at Ascension? I know that is something the Americans are involved in. What are we doing to ensure that that is resolved?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Harriett Baldwin: The last I heard was that the Americans had agreed to fix it but I had better check my facts. I thought that there had been an agreement with the Americans to fix the runway.

- Q90 **Andrew Rosindell:** But a lot of people are hugely inconvenienced because of this. Can you imagine a territory of France being in this position, whereby their citizens had to go via somewhere else to get, for instance, to the Falkland Islands? We are now using Cape Verde.

Harriett Baldwin: We are definitely straying beyond Africa as we get into the middle of the Atlantic here.

- Q91 **Andrew Rosindell:** Actually, Ascension, St Helena and Tristan da Cunha are nominally under that region. Cape Verde is certainly.

Harriett Baldwin: Cape Verde, certainly.

- Q92 **Andrew Rosindell:** If I may come to my final point. What are relations like between the UK Government and the Government of Mauritius at the moment? Could you comment on that?

Harriett Baldwin: Obviously, we have good relations with the Government of Mauritius, but I do not think that they were helped by the campaign to take the UK to the ICJ. We argued strongly against that. It is now with the ICJ, and I should probably leave it there, but we certainly made it very clear that we were not happy about that course of action.

- Q93 **Andrew Rosindell:** Is it still UK Government policy that, if the Americans ever decided to leave Diego Garcia, Mauritius would have first right to take the Chagos Islands back under Mauritian sovereignty?

Harriett Baldwin: As I say, the perimeters of the Minister for Africa portfolio stop at the perimeters of Mauritius, so I will pass that question on to my colleague who is in charge of our policy on the Chagos Islands and Diego Garcia.

- Q94 **Mike Gapes:** In answer to the question about Nigeria, you mentioned military training. Nigeria is very important in the African Union in terms of the size of its armed forces and their role in ECOWAS, for example. However, we actually met the African Union's military people when we were in Abuja, and it is recognised that that needs to be developed a lot more. Some countries—the French have been working with Chad—have quite sophisticated and well-funded military organisations, but Nigeria and other countries have often faced a lack of resources. Is the FCO, through the conflict, stability and security fund, pressing for more support—including financial support—to be given to some of the key African countries to try to get well-trained and well-equipped forces with better capabilities? Some of the problems relate to logistics, how many viable aircraft there are, and all those kinds of questions.

Harriett Baldwin: The UK does an enormous amount of work in each of these distinct United Nations missions and with certain countries—Nigeria is one of them—in terms of training. Clearly, the UK's involvement varies depending on the mission, but one thing is common to all of them: we



value the contribution made by troop-contributing countries to stabilising a range of United Nations missions around the continent. That value is incredibly high, and we are always willing to play our part and to make the case to other countries about how important it is to support those missions, often financially. Does anyone want to add anything?

Neil Wigan: On Nigeria specifically, yes we do support the Nigerian military through the CSSF, which funds the training teams we talked about, but I would say that a fundamental problem is how the Nigerian army uses the resource it currently has. The former Secretary of State could speak very eloquently about that. We would be very happy to work with the Nigerians, for example, to improve their procurement systems, but that partly depends on them engaging us in a way that would make that work most effectively. As the Minister said, we work with a range of other troop-contributing countries to provide them with specific pre-deployment training before they go to Somalia and so on.

- Q95 **Mike Gapes:** I went to Sierra Leone with the then Secretary of State for Defence. Julian Lewis from the Defence Committee and I went together on the VC10. At that point, there were terrible stories about troops looting and taking out light bulbs when they were leaving after their role in Sierra Leone ended. That was 18 years ago—I hope things have improved a lot since then. I understand that there were also human rights concerns about the way in which the anti-Boko Haram operation was conducted, for example. That perhaps influences how involved our military can get with another country's forces.

Harriett Baldwin: You are absolutely across the range of different policy conundrums. Earlier in this discussion, we were talking about the work we do looking at the human rights and security situation in countries, and the risks we sometimes have to take. One strand of what we do is, first, have zero tolerance of any kind of sexual exploitation and abuse by any of those troops. We support the UN's approach to that. Secondly, as I was mentioning to the Chairman earlier, the training we can deliver has a powerful impact. It multiplies as the trainers train the trainers and so on.

- Q96 **Mike Gapes:** But we need to help. This doesn't just apply to this context—it also applies to, for example, Saudi Arabia's targeting, and so on. We need to give assistance where we have got skills to other forces in other contexts. There is always the blowback—the reputational damage—if something goes wrong. The media then runs the story that Britain is somehow complicit in, controlling of or responsible for something that hasn't worked out very well.

Harriett Baldwin: We absolutely have to keep all those things under continuous review, but we must recognise the positive impact that that engagement has. You mentioned Sierra Leone. Isn't it wonderful that they have just had their first set of elections? There have been very few irregularities and moments of violence. That is a historic milestone, and the UK is really proud of the role we have played in so many different ways in Sierra Leone. That is a really good example of why it is really important not to give up on these things.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q97 **Mike Gapes:** Under successive Governments over a long time.

Harriett Baldwin: Absolutely.

Chair: Minister, thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

Harriett Baldwin: On that happy note—

Chair: You have been very generous and extremely detailed on many of the answers. There are a few issues about which we will ask you to write—I am sure you have taken notes. Otherwise, we will drop you a note of what they are. It is very nice to see you and your team here, some of whom I met many years ago in Beirut. It is very nice to see you all, and thank you very much for coming.

Harriett Baldwin: Thanks for paying such close attention to the work of the Minister for Africa.