



Foreign, Commonwealth
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Tom Tugendhat MP
House of Commons
London
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25 July 2022

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 12 July, addressed to the Foreign Secretary, regarding the FCDO's response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's recent inquiry into the Integrated Review and Nigeria. I am responding on the Foreign Secretary's behalf as the Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In your correspondence, you highlight two points that you felt the FCDO did not address in its response to the inquiry's recommendations: i) providing platforms where members of the Nigerian diaspora can engage with Government; and ii) involving the diaspora in conversations about peacebuilding and security.

We agree that it is important to listen to the diaspora. Given the large size of the Nigerian diaspora in the UK, numbering over 200,000, we find that the most effective way to engage with its members is through specific, targeted initiatives on issues of mutual interest, such as those we listed in our response to the inquiry's recommendations (including a creative sectors trade mission from the UK to Nigeria and a business-to-business tech event linked to EDF7 in April). While these were not labelled focus groups, they fulfilled the same functions: they allowed HMG to listen to the views and expertise of the diaspora and to understand the issues that matter to them.

I would like to reassure the Committee that I have looked to adopt a more ambitious approach in reaching out to Nigerian and other African diaspora groups since my appointment. Their enthusiasm and insight are valuable resources. However, the redeployment of staff to support our response to the Russia-Ukraine crisis has limited the Department's capacity to deliver larger scale diaspora engagement. I would like to reassure the Committee that we are committed to stepping up our engagement with the Nigerian diaspora, with a view to developing plans for further activities in the autumn.

As you rightly point out, security in Nigeria is a sensitive and complex issue. FCDO officials engage diaspora involved in peacebuilding in Nigeria, and we value and learn from their knowledge of the political and security landscape of the country. We will consider widening our outreach on security matters to diaspora in the UK as we step up engagement more broadly. Given limited capacity recently, and the dynamic and localised nature of Nigeria's security situation, officials have focused our outreach on Nigerians who live in Nigeria, who have first-hand experience of the complex and nuanced situation on the ground, and who accept that solutions to insecurity will require careful and patient approaches. As direct participants in the peacebuilding process, they are our first priority to mobilise for dialogue, in order to bring a swifter resolution to the conflict affecting their communities.

I hope this letter addresses your outstanding concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicky Ford', written in a cursive style.

Vicky Ford MP
Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean



Foreign Affairs Committee

From the Chair
Tom Tugendhat MP

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
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12 July 2022

Dear Foreign Secretary,

As part of the Committee's inquiry on the Integrated Review and Nigeria, we made a number of recommendations around engaging the Nigerian community in the UK. In the Government's response you outline how the High Commission engages with media outlets followed by the Nigerian diaspora in the UK and the efforts made to engage members of the diaspora in the creative arts and tech sectors.

However, the thrust of the Committee's recommendations was around the Government actively listening to the Nigerian community in the UK and providing platforms to maximise their opportunities of engagement. The examples provided in the response misinterpret the focus of our recommendation and do not adequately capture any steps the Government is taking to benefit from the views of the diaspora and utilise their enthusiasm.

Moreover, interlocutors organised by the High Commission in Nigeria emphasised opportunities for the Nigerian community in the UK to engage with peace building initiatives in Nigeria. We appreciate that these are very complex situations; but the dismissal of this suggestion would appear contrary to the views we heard from interlocutors valued by the Government and a missed opportunity to engage with the Nigerian diaspora in the UK.

Overall we found the Government's response sends an unhelpful signal to the Nigerian diaspora in the UK and fails to take proper account of an important contribution to the strengthening of relations with an extremely valuable partner.

TOM TUGENDHAT