

Foreign Affairs Committee

House of Commons · London · SW1A 0AA



International Development Committee

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Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP
Leader of the House of Commons
House of Commons

8 December 2020

Committees on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Dear Jacob,

Thank you for your letter of 2 December setting out your decision not to bring forward proposals to changes to the select committee structure for scrutiny of the portfolios now merged within the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). As you say, the dedicated scrutiny of UK aid is strongly supported in Parliament.

The status quo, which you have identified as the option providing the best balance, has the advantage of familiarity and stability with a small number of matters worth mentioning at this juncture.

Clearly, the merger of DFID and the FCO will have imposed additional burdens on the department's senior leadership as well as providing additional resources. We are grateful for the value being placed on effective scrutiny of the breadth and depth of the FCDO's new mission. Both Committees look forward to working with Ministers and officials to provide for an appropriate level of accountability and discharge our responsibilities to the House in the spirit these duties were originally delegated.

As Committee Chairs, we will work together to ensure that our activities are complementary. Given that the merger of the two departments was designed to provide greater strategic cohesion, it is inevitable that our Committees will share interests in some overarching and cross-cutting policy issues from time to time. We trust that, as when inquiries have crossed actual departmental boundaries, the Government will engage constructively and FCDO Ministers will respond positively to reasonable requests to appear to give evidence to either Committee, as appropriate.

We believe it is perfectly possible to interpret our current remits to conduct effective and meaningful scrutiny of the expenditure, administration and policy of the FCDO between our Committees. However, we also recognise that Standing Orders will eventually need amending to reflect the new department and other changes. As Ministers have said, scrutiny arrangements are a matter for Parliament. Accordingly, we intend to develop and bring forward amendments to Standing Orders to reflect the new situation in due course; and trust that you will arrange for our proposals to be put before the House when parliamentary time allows.

Best wishes

TOM TUGENDHAT

SARAH CHAMPION