



House of Commons

House of Lords

Joint Committee on the
National Security Strategy

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2022–23

**First Special Report of
Session 2023–24**

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 4 December 2023*

*Ordered by the House of Lords to be
printed 4 December 2023*

**HC 349
HL Paper 22**

Published on 6 December 2023
by authority of the House of Commons and the House of Lords

The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy is appointed by the House of Lords and the House of Commons to consider the National Security Strategy.

Current membership

House of Lords

[Lord Butler of Brockwell](#) (*Crossbench*)

[Baroness Crawley](#) (*Labour*)

[Lord Dannatt](#) (*Crossbench*)

[Baroness Fall](#) (*Conservative*)

[Lord Reid of Cardowan](#) (*Labour*)

[Lord Robathan](#) (*Conservative*)

[Lord Sarfraz](#) (*Conservative*)

[Lord Snape](#) (*Labour*)

[Viscount Stansgate](#) (*Labour*)

[Lord Strasburger](#) (*Liberal Democrat*)

House of Commons

[Margaret Beckett MP](#) (*Labour, Derby South*) (Chair)

[Sarah Champion MP](#) (*Labour, Rotherham*)

[Robert Courts MP](#) (*Conservative*)

[Richard Graham MP](#) (*Conservative, Gloucester*)

[Diana Johnson MP](#) (*Labour, Kingston upon Hull North*)

[Darren Jones MP](#) (*Labour, Bristol North West*)

[Alicia Kearns MP](#) (*Conservative, Rutland and Melton*)

[Angus Brendan MacNeil MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Na h-Eileanan an Iar*)

[Stephen McPartland MP](#) (*Conservative, Stevenage*)

[Sir Robert Neill MP](#) (*Conservative, Bromley and Chislehurst*)

[Bob Stewart MP](#) (*Conservative, Beckenham*)

[Tom Tugendhat MP](#) (*Conservative, Tonbridge and Malling*)

After his appointment to a Ministerial post on 6 September 2022, [Tom Tugendhat MP](#) recused himself from meetings and ceased to receive Committee papers.

After his appointment to a Shadow Ministerial post on 4 September 2023, [Darren Jones MP](#) also recused himself from meetings and ceased to receive Committee papers.

[Lord Ashton of Hyde](#) was a JCNSS Member from January 2023 until June 2023.

[Mr Tobias Ellwood](#) was a JCNSS Member until 11 November 2023, when he was discharged from the Committee.

Powers

The Committee has the power to require the submission of written evidence and documents, to examine witnesses, to meet at any time (except when Parliament is

prorogued or dissolved), to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom, to appoint specialist advisers, and to make Reports to both Houses. The Lords Committee has power to agree with the Commons in the appointment of a Chairman.

Publications

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2022. This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament Licence, which is published at www.parliament.uk/copyright.

The Reports of the Committee are published by Order of both Houses. All publications of the Committee are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/jcnss.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Grace Annan (Commons Committee Specialist), Lucy Arora (Head of International Affairs Unit), Medha Bhasin (Commons Clerk of the Committee), Carolyn Bowes (Commons Committee Operations Officer), Jessica Bridges Palmer (Senior Media and Communications Officer), Glenn Chapman (Lords Committee Operations Officer), Ashlee Godwin (Commons Head of International Affairs and National Security Hub), Beth Hooper (Lords Clerk) and Emma Makey (Senior Committee Specialist, International Development Committee).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Commons Clerk of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone numbers for enquiries are 020 7219 3869/4043; the Committee's email address is jcnss@parliament.uk.

Contents

First Special Report	3
Appendix: The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Government Response	3
Summary:	3
ODA budgetary constraints	3
UK Integrated Security Fund	5
Committee Recommendations	6

First Special Report

The Committee published its Second Report of Session 2022–23, The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (HC 1389, HL Paper 253), on 20 September 2023. The Government's response was received on 16 November 2023 and is appended to this report.

Appendix: The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Government Response

The Government is grateful for the work of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy and their report on the CSSF (HC 1389 HL 253, 20 September 2023). Please find below the Government's response to the Committee's conclusions and recommendations:

Summary:

The CSSF has continued to bolster efforts in preventing conflict and building stability overseas whilst combatting threats to UK national security. During a difficult fiscal environment, the CSSF has made a tangible contribution tackling the highest-priority threats to UK national security. The transition to a new UK Integrated Security Fund (ISF) provides an opportunity to refocus the suite of programmes, to ensure that there is work both internationally and domestically, and to pilot new activity and approaches to enhance national security in a more integrated fashion. Good progress is being made on transition.

ODA budgetary constraints

1. The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) was established to deliver a cross-Government response to challenges overseas which threaten UK national security, using both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funding. ODA programmes within the CSSF have suffered significant cuts, shifting the emphasis of the Fund away from peacebuilding and conflict prevention and creating a de facto deprioritisation of development work within the Fund. We are concerned that the cuts to ODA-funded programmes within the CSSF are likely to impair the ability of the UK Government to anticipate conflict, prevent escalation, and respond effectively to areas of known instability across the world, which may be a false economy. In addition, these cuts may have impaired the Government's ability to respond effectively to recent crises in the Middle East and Sudan. (Paragraph 13)

Government response (Cabinet Office):

In financial year 2022–2023, the Fund continued to prioritise spending on areas linked to conflict, stability and security overseas that pose the greatest direct threat to the UK including the Middle East and Africa. These tend to be in areas where some of the world's most vulnerable populations live.

The Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories programme was largely protected from previous reductions in overall allocations, given the fragility of the situation and the importance of this region to the UK's security. The Government will, of course, keep the situation there and the implications for the Fund's future work in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories under close review.

In 2022–2023, the Fund was aligned with the priorities outlined in the UK International Development Strategy (IDS). The Strategy identifies conflict, instability and state threats as key development challenges. Development will continue to be an important tool to tackle security and improve stability under the new ISF as it has been for the CSSF. During financial year 2022–2023, conflict prevention and resolution remained a central purpose of the CSSF. Examples of successful programmes include:

- Pakistan Regional Stability Programme
- Ukraine Cyber Programme
- Collaborating Against Trafficking and Smuggling in Nigeria/Niger
- Syria CSSF: Civilian Protection, Accountability and Transitional Justice Programme
- Jordan CSSF: Security and Stability Programme

A good deal of CSSF programming effort in live conflict contexts is about trying to prevent conflicts getting worse and resolving them. The CSSF is well-integrated with wider FCDO and cross Government work and has good access to analytical and early warning tools including products from the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) in the Cabinet Office, and the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) in the FCDO.

The CSSF continues to work in very fragile contexts to help prevent conflict. Whilst overall funding challenges have meant that the Government have had to make some difficult choices over allocations and the breadth of activity, we are strategic in the way we align and maximise resources. For example, the East Africa programme is in the early stages of a significant project to promote stability on the Borderlands of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia to prevent further cross-border conflict instigated by Al-Shabaab. This includes support to security bodies, promoting dialogue and providing social-economic support to target groups. This work fills a particular niche which benefits from, and helps inform, the FCDO and other partner development funding. For example, stabilisation work in Somalia started early to try to prevent further conflict, allowing more substantial stabilisation funding to follow later.

The CSSF also manages the UK Government's funding of peacekeeping operations and deployments and manages the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM). Peacekeeping amounts for 36% of the Fund. The RRM allows for the rapid mobilisation of emergency non-ODA resources. This was used most recently during Russia's invasion of Ukraine all of which was maintained despite funding challenges and which helps to prevent, or respond to, instability.

UK Integrated Security Fund

2. The CSSF has developed a distinct identity as an agile fund, under control from the centre, undertaking work to prevent conflict and promote stability overseas, including projects that other funders would often deem too high-risk. In the transition to the ISF, there is a risk that this identity will be diluted amongst other more disparate policy aims, and that domestic political pressures will take priority. (Paragraph 19)

Government response (Cabinet Office):

Strong governance structures will ensure that ISF programming contributes to UK security and resilience in line with the Integrated Reviews in 2021 and 2023. The transformation from the CSSF to the ISF will ensure the Fund is aligned with the IRR objectives in a coherent and integrated way.

The ISF will have an expanded remit and offer HMG a strengthened means of delivering on the most pressing of national security priorities outlined in the IRR. The Government will retain the many benefits and strengths of the CSSF as it transitions to the ISF. These include its agility and ability to fund higher-risk activity. For example, the ISF will continue to support peace building, reconciliation and stabilisation in the Somalia programme. In financial year 2022–2023, the programme supported the resolution of an active land dispute between two major clans in an area recently recovered from Al-Shabaab. The nature of the conflict dynamics makes this a complex and high risk operating environment. This particular project supported peace negotiations and reconciliation meetings between elders from warring clans and local government representatives which resulted in a peace deal, with the local government maintaining communication with local actors to ensure the terms of the peace deal are upheld.

The ISF will offer significant opportunities to support domestic national security through greater integration. It will link domestic and overseas work and build on the success of the CSSF, which has enabled the UK to export world leading expertise in key areas to strengthen UK relationships and provide greater security for the UK and our allies. For example, challenges to the UK from transnational threats such as cyber or from serious and organised crime call for greater integration of effort to tackle these threats domestically and internationally. A good example is the integration of CSSF overseas programmes designed to disrupt the supply of class A drugs to the UK with the work of the UK overseas operational networks and domestic activity under HMG's Drugs Strategy. Working alongside UK anti-narcotics law enforcement teams overseas, CSSF programmes have significantly improved detection and seizure of illicit drugs along the main trafficking routes to the UK, from Ecuador and Nigeria to Turkey and the Balkans. These overseas interventions have then provided intelligence which has informed seizures and investigations in the UK.

The Government intends to bring some key existing programmes, such as the National Cyber Programme, into the scope of the ISF. The ISF will also support the work of the new Economic Deterrence Initiative (EDI), which will extend the reach of the UK's sanction regime, tackling sanctions evasion across the UK's trade, transport and financial sectors.

Taking a more holistic approach will help to better counter threats to UK national security where they manifest both domestically and overseas, for example, Cyber and Serious and Organised Crime, and make better use of public funds.

3. We are concerned about the lack of clarity surrounding core practical points relating to the ISF transition period, and the impact of this uncertainty upon organisations currently implementing CSSF programmes. It is also unknown to what extent the current commitments to transparency, monitoring and evaluation of activities will continue. (Paragraph 21)

Government response (Cabinet Office):

The Government is engaging with implementers and partners to ensure that they have a good understanding of the transition to the ISF. The Cabinet Office will manage a single allocation process for financial year 2024–2025 and will ensure that implementing partners are given as much notice as possible of their allocations under the ISF to provide as much certainty as possible. For the National Cyber Programme, work has already begun to align and integrate delivery in order to prevent any disruption or duplication.

Ensuring robust evidence on the effectiveness of policies and programmes sits at the heart of government spending decisions. Programme teams regularly engage with organisations implementing programmes under the CSSF to ensure that lessons are learnt quickly from those carrying out the work. This drives continuous improvements in the way programmes are delivered.

The ISF will continue to build on CSSF monitoring and evaluation data. This will be used to inform decisions on whether programmes should be continued, expanded, modified or stopped. This will improve outcomes by ensuring programmes are delivered effectively, whilst retaining the Fund's principles of agility and ability to focus on high impact, high risk activity.

The Government will maintain its current commitment to transparency, monitoring and evaluation of activities as an intrinsic part of effective programming.

Committee Recommendations

1. Write to the Committee on a quarterly basis during the transition period for the Fund, providing details of timelines and progress made, and sharing examples of how the bidding process is clarified with NGOs during this period. (Paragraph 22)

Government response (Cabinet Office):

The Government disagrees with this recommendation as quarterly reporting would not allow sufficient time for changes to become established or for trends to be analysed. The Minister for the CSSF does, however, commit to updating the Committee during the transition period and will inform the Committee of major developments. The Government will continue to maintain strong relationships with implementing partners including NGOs which will be an important element in the Fund's ability to deliver. The

new Commercial Framework is now live following a tender process. CSSF Commercial will run regular market engagement sessions. This has proved to be a successful approach under the CSSF.

2. *Commit to ensuring that the Integrated Security Fund maintains the CSSF's current levels of transparency in the publication of information on programme activity, spend and performance (for ODA-eligible ISF programmes, documents should demonstrate mapping against relevant Sustainable Development Goals).* (Paragraph 22)

Government response (Cabinet Office):

The Government remains committed to transparency, as well as monitoring and evaluation of activities. These will continue as an integral part of the programming cycle. Programmes will be designed in alignment with the IRR and will be evaluated against the IRR's goals.

3. *Commit to ensuring that the Integrated Security Fund maintains the CSSF's current level of monitoring and evaluation of activities.* (Paragraph 22)

Government response (Cabinet Office):

The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation. Monitoring and evaluation are already, and will remain, a fundamental part of how the CSSF operates and ISF will operate. Each programme is reviewed annually to measure progress achieved. An assessment of the quality of delivery and intended impact is carried out at the end of each programme. Learning from previous years and programmes is integrated into future programming and design.