

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP, Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE and Nick Dyer
Minister for Development and Africa, Permanent and Second Permanent Under-Secretary
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
By email

13th February 2024

Diversity within the FCDO

Dear Minister Mitchell, Sir Philip and Nick,

Thank you for your letter response on 5th January following our evidence session on the 2022-23 FCDO Annual Report and Accounts. Last week, we held an evidence session with Minister Mitchell, who encouraged us to write to you regarding concerns we had on diversity within the FCDO.

I was very disappointed to hear that the FCDO no longer reports by legacy departments. As you will know, one of the commitments made upon the announcement of the merger was that both FCO and DFID staff would have equal opportunity to access Senior Civil Servant (SCS) positions. As a Committee, one of our concerns is that many development staff have either left the Department or have found it challenging to access SCS positions. Without having information on legacy departments recorded, both your Department and my Committee are unable to ensure that all staff have equal opportunities.

In this context, the Committee would like to know in further detail why this information is no longer reported, and how your Department is ensuring that this commitment has been met?

I would also like to follow up on the organisation chart that you provided in your letter response. We spoke about diversity within the FCDO at SCS level, and this chart shows us that despite all the efforts that may have been made, there is still a clear lack of diversity in terms of race across those who hold top leadership positions. The chart does not as easily show other demographics, however the statistics included within the Annual Report are as equally stark, with only 9% of SCS staff identifying as disabled, and 7% identifying as LGBO (terminology as used in the 2022-23 FCDO Annual Report).

Could you please provide the Committee with an update on what steps your Department is taking to ensure that it is (a) implementing inclusive recruitment practices and (b) encouraging a diverse range of candidates to apply for leadership roles?

I would be grateful if you could send your considered responses to the questions by Friday 23rd February. The Committee will publish your response in due course.

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Champion', on a light blue rectangular background.

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee