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Dear Darren,

Thank you for your letter dated 26 November and the attached report. We will take into account the expert opinion canvassed and this should provide a useful resource for the Cabinet Office COP26 Unit. The Government recognises that the fight against climate change is one of the greatest and most pressing challenges facing the modern world.

I have responded to your questions below:

1. When will the Government publish its cross-cutting strategic aims for COP26? What actions are you taking to ensure that cross-cutting goals are embedded across the five policy campaigns?

On 12 December, the Prime Minister hosted an international Climate Ambition Summit, together with the UN Secretary General and the President of France, and in partnership with Chile and Italy. In my closing speech, I set out four strategic aims for COP26: a step-change in mitigation; a strengthening of adaptation; getting finance flowing; and enhancing international collaboration.

The UK Presidency's five campaigns, in the areas of energy, transport, nature, finance, and adaptation and resilience, each aim to enhance international collaboration and accelerate progress towards a resilient and zero emission global economy. The campaigns bring governments, business and civil society together to address these systemic challenges.

We are making full use of the UK's diplomatic network, and working with a wide range of international partners, to encourage countries to come forward with stronger Nationally Determined Contributions, and to advance the campaigns. We are also committed to working with all parties to deliver progress across all mandated negotiations for COP26.

2. What actions are you taking to prepare for the new US administration, so that you can commence proactive, constructive cooperation on climate change and COP26 from the first day of the new Presidential term?

The UK welcomes President-elect Biden's commitment to re-join the Paris Agreement and to put the US on a path to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The Prime Minister has spoken to President-elect Biden and agreed on the importance of climate action. I also spoke at a panel event with John Kerry at the Paris Peace Forum prior to his nomination as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. As the

incoming Presidency of the G7 and COP26, we look forward to working with the new administration to address the urgent challenge of climate change and to encourage countries across the world to increase their climate ambition.

The UK has worked closely with states, cities, businesses and others at the sub-national level to strengthen climate action in the US, and will continue to do so. Renewed action and leadership from the US on climate change will strengthen momentum for a successful COP26, building on the huge progress in the last few months, with countries and non-state actors around the world making new commitments, as demonstrated by the success of the Climate Ambition Summit on 12th December.

3. How are you working with China to support its Presidency of the Biodiversity COP15 and to encourage Chinese support for an ambitious Climate COP26?

The Prime Minister has agreed with President Xi that the UK and China should work together to achieve mutually supportive outcomes at UNFCCC COP26 and CBD COP15, as the respective hosts. I am also in contact with my counterpart, the Environment Minister Huang, to take this collaboration forward along with senior officials.

The UK welcomed President Xi's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, which he reaffirmed at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December. We look forward to hearing more detail as China develops its 14th Five Year Plan and hope they will bring forward a Nationally Determined Contribution aligned with their 2060 target.

We want to continue to work with China to deliver further ambitious action to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

4. Will the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) be aligned with the Climate Change Committee's advice for the Sixth Carbon Budget? Will you publish a Climate Action Plan that sets out a clear strategy to deliver on the NDC by February (nine months before COP26), as requested by the UNFCCC?

The level of the UK's NDC is consistent with guidance from the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) on the sixth carbon budget. In its advice, the CCC stated that an NDC of at least 68% 'would constitute a decisive commitment to a net zero emissions trajectory, consistent with the Paris Agreement', which 'would place the UK among the leading countries in climate ambition'.

The Paris Agreement requires Parties to communicate their NDCs at least 9 to 12 months in advance of the relevant session of the Conference of the Parties. The UK communicated its NDC to the UNFCCC on 12 December 2020, so has met this requirement.

Ahead of COP26, the UK will publish a Net Zero Strategy, setting out the government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy by 2050, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK. The Net Zero

Strategy will form the basis of the UK's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy to the UNFCCC.

5. How is the Government engaging with marginalised and underrepresented groups in the run-up to COP26? To what extent are you prioritising diplomacy with countries in the global south?

I have established a number of advisory groups to guide our planning and delivery of COP, including a Civil Society and Youth Advisory Council and a Friends of COP group. These groups have diverse representation, including Indigenous Peoples and youth representatives, as well as wider civil society experts.

In diplomatic engagement with the global south, we are engaging with a wide range of countries, from big emitters to the small island developing states and least developed countries already seeing the effects of climate change. We recognise the vital role of the most climate-vulnerable states in driving global ambition for climate action. We are seeking to amplify their voices and drive action on their priorities ahead of COP26.

On 13 November, I joined an African Union meeting with African Ministers for Environment and Energy to update them on the Climate Ambition Summit and share priorities ahead of COP26. We have also been working closely at official level with the African Union on a joint Green Recovery Action Plan in response to the dual challenges of climate change and COVID-19. On 11 December, we co-hosted a 'Moment of Ambition' roundtable with CARICOM and Caribbean ministers. On the same day, I also participated in the 'Kainaki II to COP 26' - the Pacific Islands Forum high-level roundtable on urgent climate action. This engagement will continue. In addition, I have engaged directly with ministers from a range of countries including South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, India, Bhutan, Gabon, Colombia, Thailand, Morocco and Egypt.

I announced at the Climate Ambition Summit that we will bring climate vulnerable and donor countries together in March to address the connected challenges of climate change and development. Working to co-develop the event with vulnerable country partners, it will focus on tangible problem-solving for priority issues.

6. How does the Government plan to leverage COP26 as a focus-point for public education and engagement on climate change and the net zero transition? What are your target outcomes for this?

The campaign 'Together for our Planet' was unveiled in November marking the one year to COP26 milestone. Many people from all over the UK are already playing their part in tackling climate change. The campaign will celebrate them, inspire more to join them and engage the public on the importance of climate action in the run-up to COP26. The campaign will also serve as a platform to convey the UK's achievements over the next year in its aim to reach Net Zero by 2050. It will raise awareness of key climate issues and encourage the public to take more action against Climate Change, for example through Count Us In, an initiative that suggests and logs climate actions by global citizens.

As part of this campaign, we are inviting businesses from every corner of the UK to join us in the Race to Zero, the largest alliance of businesses, cities, regions, investors and universities ever committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the very latest.

To help drive this action, Andrew Griffith MP has been appointed as the UK's Net Zero Business Champion to support the country's business community to make credible plans to net zero by 2050 or earlier and showcase the progress made.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping loops and curves, ending with a small dot.

THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy