



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington**  
Minister of State for International  
Development, Latin America and the  
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London  
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Sarah Champion MP  
Chair, International Development Committee  
House of Commons  
Palace of Westminster  
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13 March 2025

Dear Sarah,

### **Preparations for the reduction in UK Official Development Assistance (ODA)**

I am writing to you in my new capacity as Minister of State for International Development, Latin American and the Caribbean; I look forward to working with you closely in this role and thank you for the letter you sent to the Prime Minister earlier this week which I will consider carefully. Most immediately, I want to update you on the urgent measures FCDO is implementing to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to increase spending on defence to 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product from April 2027, funded by reducing ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% of Gross National Income (GNI).

National security is the first duty of the government. In recent years, the world has been reshaped by global instability, including Russian aggression in Ukraine, increasing threats from malign actors, rapid technological change, and the accelerating impacts of climate change. The difficult decision to lower international development spending balances the imperative of national security with the commitment to a world free from poverty on a liveable planet, while remaining within the government's fiscal rules to safeguard economic stability.

In a tough fiscal environment, all our spending must be focused on ensuring that every pound is spent in the most impactful way. We will continue to play a key humanitarian role in the world's worst conflict zones of Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan and remain committed to returning development spending to 0.7% of GNI when the fiscal conditions allow.

Delivering this reduction will require many hard choices, at a time of significant geopolitical tension in a fast-changing global landscape. Vital lessons have been learned from previous ODA reductions. I am clear on the importance of honouring commitments and agreements where possible. We will engage openly with stakeholders and keep the International Development Committee closely apprised of our progress. In this spirit, I want to update you on the immediate steps FCDO is taking.

Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review. Equalities impacts, value for money, and risk mitigation for partners in FCDO's supply chain will be considered throughout. Given the multi-year nature of many international development spending commitments, FCDO is currently reassessing its ODA spending plans for 2025/26 to ensure they deliver maximum value for money in the context of the transition to spending 0.3% of GNI on ODA by 2027.

As an immediate step, FCDO's Second Permanent Under-Secretary on Friday 7 March issued an instruction to all ODA programme teams in FCDO not to agree new business cases, new contracts or agreements, or announce new funding until initial allocations for FCDO ODA in 2025/26 are set later this month. Confirming initial allocations now is essential for the continuity of key programme delivery. Final 2025/26 allocations will be agreed in the summer, coherent with our multi-year plans for meeting 0.3% of GNI by 2027. My ambition is to publish the final 2025/26 allocations in the 2024/25 FCDO Annual Report & Accounts.

A transition to spending 0.3% of GNI on ODA will require significant shifts, building on those already underway as the government implements its modernised approach to development. This means establishing broad long-term partnerships based on mutual interests and respect and mobilising the full range of resources and expertise across government and UK institutions, such as in the science and technology sector, the City of London and our universities. This transition will draw on recommendations of the Development Review which are being considered as part of the Foreign Secretary's wider work to reform FCDO.

The International Development Committee will play a vital role as these changes are delivered, and I look forward to working closely with you and the wider Committee. I would welcome the opportunity to meet you in the coming weeks and look forward to attending the Committee in due course.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Baroness Chapman of Darlington', written in a cursive style.

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington**  
**Minister of State for International Development, Latin America and the Caribbean**