



Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH

From the Permanent Under-Secretary

Dame Emily Thornberry
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

30 October 2025

[Dear Chair,]

**DIRECT MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS TO HEADS OF MISSION ROLES IN
THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE**

Chris Wormald is writing today to the Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee attaching the Cabinet Office's central guidance on the principles that should govern Direct Ministerial Appointments (DMAs) to central government positions. Such appointments can in principle be made to Head of Mission (HoM) roles in the Diplomatic Service under Section 10 (3) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance (CRAG) Act 2010. This letter explains how we are applying these principles for any future DMAs in the Diplomatic Service.

2. It is for the Foreign Secretary to recommend HoM appointments to His Majesty The King. Should she, or the Prime Minister, wish to make a DMA, the proposed name will be shared with me. The FCDO will then conduct an open-source due diligence exercise. The focus of this exercise will be on exposing any potential future reputational risks, rather than national security risks (which remain the preserve of the national security vetting process). This exercise will then inform an interview with the candidate in which any issues of concern are put to them and a general opportunity to make any relevant disclosures is offered. I would then advise Ministers on how any identified issues might be managed or mitigated.

3. Following this process, assuming Ministers wish to proceed with recommending a DMA to HM The King, the appointee will be treated like a career diplomat. This means they will be: required to obtain relevant security clearances; given a fixed term contract tied to the post to which they are being appointed lasting for either the standard posting length for that job or until the end of the Parliament, whichever is shorter; and briefed on their obligations under the Diplomatic Service Code – including the requirement to be politically impartial.

4. Once an appointment has been made and taken up, it is of course open to your Select Committee to request briefings from FCDO officials, including Heads of Mission.

5. I have copied this letter to Sir Chris Wormald (Cabinet Office) and Simon Hoare MP, Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

[Yours sincerely,]

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "O. Robbins". The signature is stylized with a large "O" and a cursive "Robbins".

OLIVER ROBBINS