



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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Sarah Champion MP
Chair, International Development Committee
House of Commons
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9 February 2026

Dear Sarah

Thank you for your letter of 27 November regarding FCDO staffing.

I know that most of the questions you raised were addressed at length at the Committee's session with Sir Olly Robbins and Nick Dyer on 9 December, so I will not repeat the points that they made. But I did want to take this opportunity to reiterate some of the strategic imperatives and approaches which underpin the FCDO2030 programme.

As the Permanent Secretaries explained, FCDO2030 is about ensuring we have an effective, strategic and capable organisation fit for a rapidly changing world. This requires a Department with a clear, long-term set of priorities, and the efficient, flexible allocation of resources required to achieve maximum impact. It also requires a more agile Department, with structures that enable greater accountability, and the right mix of skills and capabilities for the future, including making better use of data and technology. My Ministerial team and I fully recognise that case for change, and the urgency with which it is being pursued.

That is particularly true given the fiscal realities facing the Department. As you know, the FCDO is operating against a flat cash allocation and with ODA at 0.3%. Baroness Chapman wrote to you on 12 June 2025 explaining how we intended to sustain development work in that context, including through our multilateral partnerships. Our new approach to development – moving from donor to investor, from service delivery to system support, and from grants to expertise – would have been the right approach in any circumstances but is especially important as we work to maximise the impact of our ODA spending.

As the Permanent Secretaries explained, the Department is developing a Workforce Strategy for the Spending Review period, which will align staffing allocations to delivery priorities, and ensure we have a skilled, motivated and empowered workforce for the future. The Department takes its statutory obligations on consultation very seriously, and our Human Resources Directorate is meeting our Trade Unions, including the PCS Union, twice

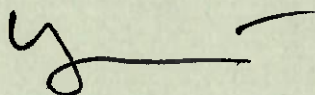
a week over this period. A structured assessment of skills and capabilities has also been agreed with the Trade Unions to inform the Workforce Strategy.

I know that the IDC, and your counterparts on the Foreign Affairs Committee, will want to ask further detailed questions about different aspects of the FCDO2030 programme as it is implemented, so the Department will be happy to use future planned engagements with both Committees at official level to brief on details of the new high-level structures and workforce approach in the UK and overseas when appropriate to do so.

In my five months as Foreign Secretary, I have seen, and been deeply impressed by, the work of teams throughout the FCDO headquarters and at Posts overseas. Like you, I value that work immensely and I am determined to continue working to create a modern, open, and outcome-focused FCDO, which delivers for the British people.

I look forward to discussing the work of the Department with the Committee soon.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Yvette Cooper', with a stylized flourish at the end.

THE RT HON. YVETTE COOPER MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs