



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for Foreign,
Commonwealth and Development Affairs

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

The Rt Hon. Dame Emily Thornberry DBE MP
Chain, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

23 March 2026

Dear Emily,

I undertook to write to the Committee with further detail on my priorities as Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs. I have now set these out for the Department for the Spending Review period ahead, and wanted to share them with you in the form that the Permanent Under-Secretary and I have communicated them to FCDO staff.

The world we face in 2026 is volatile, contested and unstable – with conflict increasing, protectionism rising and technology transforming our lives.

In recent weeks we have seen intense escalation in the Middle East region, with increasingly reckless strikes from the Iranian regime targeting Gulf partners, including strikes on bases, on airports and on hotels which directly put British lives at risk.

This crisis illustrates once again how foreign policy affects every aspect of people's lives in the UK. Global events shape the cost of living, the safety of our citizens, the security of our borders and the resilience of our economy.

The delivery of the Department's priorities will protect UK security, promote UK prosperity and uphold UK values in a fast-changing world – and guide the whole of Government in a strategic approach to the evolving global threats and opportunities we face. We are proud of our country and confident in our role in the world, and we know that the partnerships we build abroad make us stronger at home.

That is why this Government has reset our relationship with Europe, invested in NATO – with the biggest rise in defence spending since the end of the Cold War – stepped up support to Ukraine, restored our role as a leader on climate and struck trade deals with the EU, US and India to boost jobs for working people here in our communities.

Over the last 18 months, the pace of global change has accelerated even further. Power is shifting, institutions are strained and threats are more diffuse and unpredictable than ever before. These challenges strike at the heart of both our global interests and domestic priorities. That's why we must now sharpen our focus, refresh our priorities and refine our approach to ensure we can protect the UK's interests for the long term. We need more active statecraft, more agile alliances, and a more adaptive approach to the international system to deliver on our objectives.

That means deterring our adversaries and countering rapidly evolving hybrid threats, sharpening the FCDO's focus on national security, economic security, climate security and border security. It means seizing the economic opportunities of emerging technologies and the energy transition to support jobs in every corner of our country, whilst strengthening our resilience and our supply chains in the face of new economic threats. And it means building partnerships internationally to tackle the shared challenges we face, including on illegal migration.

It means determined diplomacy – rejecting the false choice between an unruly resurgence of great power politics and an unquestioning reliance on existing multilateral frameworks, and instead seeking the new approaches, new alliances and reinvigorated, modern forms of multilateralism that will help us solve the distinct problems of today and tomorrow.

It means an innovative new approach to development, working as a partner, investor and reformer, improving lives in the most fragile and conflict-affected places, and showing international leadership in the face of increasing threats to women's safety and women's rights across the world.

Finally, it means staying true to the values that underpin Britain's foreign policy – defending democracy, supporting sovereignty, upholding the rule of law, championing humanitarian support and human rights – and being ready and prepared to defend our interests and our values in a world where these principles are increasingly under threat.

The FCDO will lead this work across Government, leveraging our world-class diplomatic service to navigate both the challenges and opportunities of the modern world, advancing our security and prosperity every single day, whilst meeting our enduring commitments to British citizens across the globe, including through our consular services, and to the UK's Overseas Territories.

Our six refreshed priorities are designed to meet this critical moment. Together they advance an international strategy that pursues the UK's long-term national interest and strategic advantage, and they reflect a foreign policy determined to deliver for people at home.

FCDO priorities

1. **Security** – Protecting Euro-Atlantic security, strengthening the NATO alliance, supporting Ukraine and deterring Russian aggression. Transforming UK capability to address growing hybrid threats to our economy, democratic processes and institutions, and working with allies to disrupt hostile actors and prevent escalating security threats.
2. **Growth and resilience** – Prioritising a targeted set of high-value economic partnerships to deliver growth and jobs in the UK. Securing new trade and investment wins to strengthen the UK economy. Boosting Britain's economic security and resilience by derisking critical supply chains, navigating bloc dynamics and sharpening our advantage in key sectors.
3. **Migration** – Increasing international cooperation to drive down small boat arrivals. Deterring illegal migration through returns agreements with neighbours and innovative approaches further afield. Improving law enforcement cooperation against people smugglers. Reforming global migration systems to deliver principled international ways to manage migration and resettlement fit for the modern world.
4. **Development and climate** – Working for a world free from poverty on a liveable planet, where the UK helps reduce humanitarian need and violent conflict. Accelerating the global clean energy transition and seizing the opportunities for Britain. Reforming the global development architecture and modernising our approach: shifting from donor to investor, from service delivery to system support, from grants to expertise, and from international intervention to local leadership.
5. **Women and Girls** – Championing the rights of women and girls to live in a world free from violence. Promoting women's full economic and political participation within their societies, with agency in the decisions that impact their lives. Working internationally to tackle new tech-enabled threats to women and girls.
6. **Agile alliances** – Pursuing resilient, pragmatic partnerships with states where we have shared priorities, both old allies and new partners. Minimising dependencies and diversifying alliances to serve Britain's interests and increase our agency abroad. Reforming the multilateral system and maximising UK influence. Making Britain a partner of choice in a contested and competitive world.

FCDO2030, the department's reform programme, will enable delivery against these priorities by delivering three long-term outcomes: a more strategic and adaptable organisation able to direct and reallocate resources quickly; a more empowered, skilled and high performing workforce; and a department equipped with modern digital tools that enhance diplomatic, development and operational delivery.

Please do let me know if you require any further information.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Yvette Cooper', written in a cursive style.

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