



**International  
Development  
Committee**

Monday, 30 March 2026

**The Rt Hon Baroness Chapman of Darlington  
Minister of State (International Development and Africa)  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**The proposed merger of UN Women and the UNFPA**

Dear Baroness Chapman,

In February, the United Nations (UN) announced its recommendation to merge two UN bodies, UN Women and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).<sup>1</sup> However, these bodies have different purposes. UN Women delivers programmes and standards which uphold women's human rights. The UNFPA, on the other hand, delivers services and programmes on sexual reproductive health, population and development strategies, tackling gender-based violence and youth empowerment.

The UN has said that the aim of the merger is to improve efficiency, strengthen impact, reduce duplication and create a single body for governments and partners to work with.<sup>2</sup> However, it has been reported that UN Women and the UNFPA both have low budgets and that bigger savings could be made by merging other agencies.<sup>3</sup>

We are concerned that this merger is not solely about savings. Rather, we are concerned that the merger forms part of the global backsliding on gender equality and the rise of an anti-gender movement. We set out our concerns about women's equality in our report 'Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security'.<sup>4</sup>

The evidence we gathered as part of this inquiry raised concerns about diluting programmes for women and girls through mainstreaming, a loss in gender expertise and the implications this will have for policy development and program delivery. We are now concerned that this is now taking place at a UN level.

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<sup>1</sup> UN, [UN80 Initiative: FAQ on UN Women x UNFPA](#), 23 February 2026

<sup>2</sup> UN, [UN80 Initiative: FAQ on UN Women x UNFPA](#), 23 February 2026

<sup>3</sup> The Guardian, [Will UN plans to transform the way it works 'throw equality under the bus'](#), 8 March 2026

<sup>4</sup> International Development Committee, [Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security](#), 23 March 2026

We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

- Do you consider this merger to pose further challenges to gender equality work at an international level?
- Are you concerned that the UN is reducing its focus on women and girls, instead of seeking to address the challenges presented by the increasing challenges faced by women and girls globally?
- Is the UK minded to vote against this proposal, if the merger goes to a General Assembly vote?
- If the merger goes ahead, how will the UK step up to show stronger leadership on policy and programmes which support women and girls?

We acknowledge that the Government recently announced that it intends to put women and girls “at the heart” of UK foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> UN Resolution 1325 indicates that women are essential for peace and security<sup>6</sup> and that higher levels of gender equality are “associated with a lower propensity for conflict, both between and within states”.<sup>7</sup> However, as the world continues to grow more “violent and disorderly”,<sup>8</sup> the Government must not lose sight of the integral role women and girls play in a peaceful future.

We trust that you will do all you can to ensure the UK stands firm against the global backsliding on gender equality. I would be grateful for your response by 10 April. In line with our practice with Committee correspondence, we will publish this letter and your response.

Yours sincerely,



**Sarah Champion MP**  
**Chair of the International Development Committee**

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<sup>5</sup> FCDO, [The UK is putting women and girls at the heart of everything that we do from development to diplomacy: UK National statement at the UN Commission on the Status of Women Gender Discussion](#), 11 March 2026

<sup>6</sup> International Development Committee, [Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security](#), 23 March 2026

<sup>7</sup> International Development Committee, [Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security](#), 23 March 2026

<sup>8</sup> International Development Committee, [Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security](#), 23 March 2026