



**The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP**  
**COP President Designate**  
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Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP  
Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee  
House of Commons  
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22 April 2021

Dear Philip,

Thank you for your letter dated 25th March following my appearance before the Environmental Audit Committee on the 12th March.

The Government recognises that the fight against climate change is one of the greatest and most pressing challenges facing the world. We will take into account the points raised by colleagues as we continue our preparations for COP26 in Glasgow this November.

I have responded to the questions from colleagues below, which I hope are helpful:

***Chris Law MP, International Development Committee***

- 1. What structures are already established, including within the Cabinet Office and other departments, to reach out to the least developed countries (LDCs) to shape the agenda ahead of COP26? How many people are working on this; how senior they are; where in Government they sit; and who leads on this work?*

LDCs are on the frontline of climate impacts and they are an essential partner in driving global action against climate change. We have engaged extensively with them at all levels to ensure their voices and issues are heard and prioritised. FCDO, BEIS Ministers and I have held bilateral meetings with LDC ministers, from Bhutan (chair of the LDC group in the UNFCCC), Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, and Zambia.

The Cabinet Office's COP26 Unit Negotiations team meets regularly with their LDC counterpart negotiators to discuss key negotiating items. The COP26 Unit also has several staff in the International Engagement team who coordinate the UK's engagement with LDCs on COP26. The COP26 team is supported by the FCDO who

have lead responsibility for engaging with LDCs and have extensive expertise. The FCDO has an overseas network of Climate, Energy and Environment Attachés in LDC countries. The four COP26 Regional Ambassadors, senior officials, and our Embassies and High Commissions have embedded climate into their international engagement.

*2. What have you learned about the needs of the LDCs at COP26 from your visits as COP President Designate?*

I have been on in-person visits this year to Ethiopia where I met the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister along with Ethiopia's 'Enfluencers' Network, a group of young environmental activists and influencers who are working to raise awareness and build support for climate action. I have also visited Nepal where I met with climate champions, civil society and government representatives including Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, and other government Ministers and officials, as well as travelling to Jomsom in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region to see the effects of climate change first hand and hear from local communities.

I have been engaging with other LDCs in virtual form, as have other Ministers and senior officials across HMG. A number of common priorities and needs are emerging from this engagement. Firstly, a desire to see greater action on, and financial support for, adaptation and loss and damage. Secondly, a desire to see improvements in the quantity (progress towards the \$100 billion per year figure) and quality (increased proportion for adaptation, improved ease of access) of climate finance.

I co-chaired with the Foreign Secretary the Climate and Development Ministerial on 31 March where I heard from several Ministers from countries including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi and others about critical issues they face including (i) access to finance, (ii) responding to the impacts of climate change, (iii) quantity, quality, and composition of climate finance, and (iv) fiscal space and debt sustainability. In the context of the pandemic, issues around debt and the links to climate action and green recovery are being increasingly raised. Meeting energy access needs is also an important issue and, given the changing demographics of many African LDCs, the voice of youth and a focus on job creation is emerging as an important part of the climate response in Africa. Finally, nature-based solutions are key, both in terms of adaptation and mitigation.

*3. How many UK representatives abroad (either in High Commissions and Embassies but also through the UK representation in the United Nations and other multilateral bodies) are helping you to prepare for COP26?*

Climate change is a top priority for all our Heads of Mission, including those

representatives at multilateral bodies, and their teams. The COP26 Unit and our Heads of Mission are supported in their climate work by our overseas network of Climate, Energy and Environment Attachés, which numbers around 462 UK diplomatic staff and Country Based Staff. They are additionally supported by four senior COP26 Regional Ambassadors.

*4. What level of engagement has there been, through FCDO diplomats, with LDCs on COP26 planning and delivery?*

The Foreign Secretary, FCDO Ministers, senior officials across government and our Embassies and High Commissions around the world have embedded climate into their international engagement. All Heads of Mission have been instructed to engage at the highest levels of government in their respective countries, including with all the LDCs.

In addition, the four COP26 Regional Ambassadors regularly engage with Ministers, senior officials, parliamentarians and civil society across their region. For example, within the LDC group, the Regional Ambassador for Asia-Pacific has had several meetings with Bangladesh whose Prime Minister is currently chair of the Climate Vulnerables Forum, in addition to meetings with Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Lao PRD and Timor-Leste. The Regional Ambassador for sub-Saharan Africa has met with senior officials from Malawi as LDC Chair, in addition to meetings with senior officials from Rwanda, Guinea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Benin, Ghana, Gabon and Liberia.

They are supported in their work by the overseas network of Climate, Energy and Environment Attachés and staff from the International Engagement Team of the COP26 Unit who also regularly engage at all levels of LDC governments.

*5. The International Development Committee previously recommended that climate change is a strategic priority that is to be integrated into all aid spending and that climate justice should be explicitly adopted. How is this being conveyed and implemented in preparation for COP26?*

The UK is strongly committed to do its part to contribute to the needs of developing countries. We are calling on donor countries to increase their climate finance to deliver on the commitment to jointly mobilise \$100bn of climate finance a year by 2020, and through to 2025.

UK aid spending on climate change is helping the most vulnerable in developing countries to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. We are doubling our International Climate Finance to at least £11.6 billion over the next five years, between 2021/22 to 2025/26. Since 2011 the UK's (ICF) has helped over 66 million people cope with the effects of climate change.

The UK will use its COP26 Presidency to mobilise the ambition set out in the Paris

Agreement, encourage greater political ambition and turn this into targeted, tangible and practical action to support adaptation and resilience. This is why the UK has endorsed the principles for locally-led adaptation to improve transparency and access to finance at a local-level.

The Prime Minister has also published the Integrated Review which places tackling climate change and preserving biodiversity as the UK's number one international priority in the decade ahead.

***Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Science and Technology Committee***

- 6. Do you plan to appoint a Chief Scientific Adviser or retain a dedicated Chief Scientific Adviser to advise you as COP President?*

I can confirm that I plan to appoint a Chief Scientific Adviser for COP26. An announcement will be made in due course.

- 7. Whether the scientific funding for climate research being provided from the UK's Official Development Assistance is to continue at the levels planned before the outcome of the 2020 Spending Review; whether any reductions are now planned or expected; and whether such funding is to be separately provided, or to be found from the existing budget of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy or elsewhere?*

The Foreign Secretary has set out a strategic approach to ODA spending, that includes investing in cutting edge technology and research-led solutions in climate and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade and economic growth.

On 26 January, the Foreign Secretary laid a Written Ministerial Statement detailing the departmental cross-government allocations of ODA spend for 2021. Departments are now working through the implications of changes for individual R&D programmes.

***Anthony Browne MP, Treasury Committee***

- 8. The Treasury has implemented policies to help green finance: green gilts, the green remit for the Monetary Policy Committee and, most importantly, making climate-related financial disclosures mandatory. What further proposals to green the international finance system are you contemplating as COP President Designate?*

The UK is providing a strong domestic example on greening the financial system, and we will use our presidencies of the G7 and COP to further these aims internationally. We are also working closely with our Italian COP co-hosts through their presidency of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors track and associated working groups, including the Sustainable Finance Study Group. We will push international collaboration on a host of issues to green the global financial system, such as mandatory reporting and disclosure, the alignment of international reporting standards, definitions on tools and approaches for green investments (such as green taxonomies), climate 'stress testing' by central banks and the issuing of supervisory expectations, all in the context of regulatory and supervisory institutions taking climate into account.

We have seen increased voluntary disclosure under the TCFD, and countries are now taking action to develop mandatory disclosure frameworks based on TCFD, following the UK's announcement to make disclosure fully mandatory across the economy by 2025. Much of this work is led by Mark Carney through our COP26 Private Finance Agenda, published by Mark Carney in November last year ([https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/COP26-Private-Finance-Hub-Strategy\\_Nov-2020v4.1.pdf](https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/COP26-Private-Finance-Hub-Strategy_Nov-2020v4.1.pdf)).

We are also urging the financial system to join the Race to Zero, setting the most robust and ambitious science-based net zero targets. We are making strong progress, with the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative now totals 73 asset managers covering \$32trn in global assets under management, including major institutions such as BlackRock and Vanguard. We will also soon be launching the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, a global alliance that brings together existing and new net zero finance initiatives into one sector-wide strategic forum and ensure consistency and credibility of finance net zero commitments.

All of this drives our objective to ensure that every financial decision takes climate into account, helping to mobilise the trillions of dollars necessary to build a global zero carbon economy and deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement.

I am also encouraged by the G7 Finance Ministers agreeing a new allocation of Special Drawing Rights, which could be used to support a green recovery from COVID.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, representing the signature of Alok Sharma.

**THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP**  
COP President Designate

