



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

James Duddridge MP
Minister for Africa

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 0207 008 5000

Email: fcdocorrespondence@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

Baroness Anelay of St Johns
Chair, International Relations and
Defence Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Our ref:
Your ref

20 April 2021

Dear Baroness Anelay,

Thank you for your letter of 17 March following up on the IRDC's report on "The UK and Sub-Saharan Africa: prosperity, peace and development cooperation". I am grateful to the Committee for their continued interest and to the Minister for Trade Policy and the Minister for International Trade for their views. I am pleased to provide you with further information in answer to the questions in your letter:

Africa Strategy

- 1. You told us during our inquiry that: "Later this year [2020] following our analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 in Africa, we will be updating the strategic approach and will publish the updated information online." The Government response stated that "We intend to publish further information in due course". Now that the Integrated Review has been published, which committed to "maintain our commitment to Africa, with a particular focus on East Africa and on important partners such as Nigeria", made further reference to "partnership with South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana in particular to further our shared prosperity goals, our democratic values and our security interests", and mentioned UK contributions to stabilisation in Sudan, Somalia and peacekeeping in Mali, when will further information on the Government's strategic approach for Africa be published?***

The Integrated Review highlights our approach to working with African Countries; we will publish further information in a new international development strategy. Our approach expands on the areas outlined in the 2018 strategic approach towards Africa and the UK's commitment to step up investment to the mutual benefit of the UK and Africa. Following the direction of the Integrated Review and the mainstreaming of the 2018 strategic approach, our top-level objectives in Africa will be: resilient and productive economies; addressing upstream threats; open societies; human development; a greener, cleaner planet; and better humanitarian preparedness. Delivering these objectives will be the basis for all work across Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on East Africa. We want to be a partner of choice for African nations and bring the best of Britain's international efforts to bear on the relationships of greatest strategic importance and areas of opportunity to achieve the greatest impact. We will use all of our levers - from high-level events and ministerial visits through to project delivery - to build partnerships and deliver on our commitment to the continent.

We will continue to share information on the implementation of this approach through speeches, articles and on social media. To illustrate this outreach, the Foreign Secretary set out the UK's offer to East Africa in The East African in February, and I spoke at a Chatham House event in December about the future of UK-Africa partnerships.

Investment

- 2. *We reiterate the importance of setting a target against which an increase in investment in Africa can be measured. How, and with what metrics, is the Government measuring the impact of UK investment on economic growth and job creation in Africa?***

The UK Government uses official Office for National Statistics to measure the UK's stock and flow of overseas investment. Additionally we consider each investment that we support, to ensure it delivers positive benefits for both local economies and the UK.

- 3. *Are all the deals announced at the Africa Investment Summit 2020 underway? Could you please provide an update on progress in this regard?***

On 20 January 2021, we hosted a virtual business-to-business Africa Investment Conference. This marked the first anniversary of the UK Africa Investment Summit. We were delighted to announce at that meeting that none of the deals announced at the summit have been lost.

Africa in Global Institutions

- 4. *How is the Government engaging leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa in G7 discussions this year?***

The G7-Africa partnership has strengthened in recent years and we are keen to ensure this continues under the UK Presidency. We will build on our historic record of supporting African issues through the G7 by delivering a package that addresses the needs of the African continent across the Leaders', Foreign and Development Ministers' and Finance Ministers' tracks. We have invited South African President Ramaphosa to attend sessions of the G7 Leaders Summit in June and Foreign Minister Pandor to join in selected parts of the first G7 Foreign and Development Ministerial meeting in May.

Commonwealth

- 5. *In its formal response to the report, the Government welcomed our "encouragement to discuss further specifically with African Commonwealth partners how the work of the Commonwealth institutions can be strengthened in Africa", and committed to "do so as part of our regular engagement with them on Commonwealth business." Could you please update us on this engagement, and the response of African Commonwealth members?***

We have engaged with African (and other) member states, in the Boards and Executive Committees of the Commonwealth's intergovernmental institutions (the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning), on how the Commonwealth can help member states - particularly small and vulnerable member states, many of which are in Africa - build back better from the pandemic and its consequences. African member states have welcomed the focus and efforts from these institutions.

The institutions continue to provide important support to African member states - for example, the Secretariat's electoral assistance and observation, good offices to encourage peace and democracy, debt management and capacity building for countering violent extremism. The UK-funded human rights and trade advisers based in the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva have assisted a number of African member states, for example in providing technical advice to Malawi and the Gambia for their Universal Periodic Reviews in the UN Human Rights Council. However, more can be done in tailoring the work of the Commonwealth institutions to address the needs of each of the Commonwealth's regions, including Africa. The upcoming CHOGM in Kigali will be a good opportunity to focus on African needs.

Debt

6. Would the Government support a further extension to the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) until the end of March 2022 (a full two years, as we proposed in our report)?

The UK has worked closely with G20 and Paris Club partners to agree a further, final, extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) until the end of 2021 and we are grateful for unanimity on this extension.

7. Can anything further be done to encourage private creditors to participate in the DSSI?

Earlier in April, the Chancellor and other G20 Finance Ministers reiterated their call for private creditors to take part in the DSSI, when requested, and the Institute for International Finance has developed Terms of Reference with the aim of facilitating effective voluntary participation. Under the Common Framework for Future Debt Treatments, launched in November, there is a clear expectation of comparable treatment from private sector creditors.

8. Does the Government regard the Common Framework for Future Debt Treatments to be sufficient, or will debt relief will also be needed? If the latter, what discussions have been had with international partners and creditors on reducing the debt burden of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa?

The Common Framework for Future Debt Treatments brings together traditional Paris Club and emerging G20 creditors to deliver coordinated debt treatments on a case-by-case basis. It seeks to ensure comparable treatment from private sector creditors. The treatments delivered under the Common Framework will be informed by the Debt Sustainability Analysis of the IMF and World Bank, alongside an assessment by creditors, and could involve debt write-offs and cancellation where required.

We are working closely with G7 and G20 partners to ensure that the Common Framework is implemented fully and transparently, reducing the debt burdens of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

FCDO structure

9. Could you please provide (1) the final organisational structure of the FCDO and (2) an explanation of how departments are structured to accommodate both former FCO issues and ODA allocation?

Following the launch of the FCDO, the FCO's Africa Directorate and DFID's Africa Regional Department are working as one organisational unit. All our Africa functions now sit in a single Africa Directorate led by two geographical Directors supported by fused teams and working through a unified overseas network. This builds upon the pre-existing close working including joint FCO-DFID units and departments, including on Africa strategy, the Sahel, Sudan and South Sudan, and Somalia. The FCDO is working at pace to innovate in how we tackle global challenges, and advance UK interests, using our combined diplomacy, development and humanitarian expertise.

ODA

10. When figures are made public in the spring, we request that you write to the Committee to set out how the reduction of the ODA budget in 2020-21 affected programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa.

11. When figures are made public please provide us with information on the cuts made to ODA programmes for 2021-22, given the planned reduction in ODA spending to 0.5% of gross national income.

The impact of the global pandemic on our economy has forced tough and painful decisions. However, we will remain a leader in International Development in Africa and will remain committed to supporting the poorest people on the continent. The reduction is proportionally greater in our bilateral spending because we are continuing to honour commitments made on contributions to multilateral organisations. For example, as a founding member of COVAX, and a significant contributor, we are committed in supporting the poorest nations in their response to COVID-19. COVAX will supply over 1 billion vaccine doses to 92 developing countries and many of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa. I will be happy to update the Committee further on ODA programming in due course.

Aid for Trade

12. When figures are made public in the spring, please write to us on the impact of cuts to ODA in (1) 2020-21 and (2) 2021-22 on the Government's support for the AU Support Programme and TradeMark East Africa.

I will be pleased to provide an update following the publication of the figures.

13. We are concerned that cuts to funding for TradeMark East Africa for may undermine its viability as a going concern. What assessment have you made of the impact of cuts on the ongoing viability of (1) TMEA's long term infrastructure projects and (2) TMEA as a going concern?

No final decisions have been made on budgets or allocations to individual programmes, but it is our intention to ensure that TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) can continue its important work in promoting trade. We intend to ensure that TMEA continues to have the capacity to finance long-term infrastructure to its completion.

14. We are concerned that the UK's reputation in East Africa, and amongst development partners, will be damaged by cuts to Aid for Trade, particularly to TMEA. What assessment have you made of the impact of UK ODA cuts to TMEA on the UK's relationships (1) in the region) and (2) with other funders of TMEA?

Our partners in East Africa rightly value TMEA's work. We are confident they will be able to continue their activities.

15. Which Aid for Trade programmes which the UK previously supported through the EU still receive funding from the UK, now that the transition period has ended?

The UK funds a number of Aid for Trade initiatives across the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the UN system, and in a number of countries across the globe. When we were part of the EU, the UK (much like many other EU member states) still funded Aid for Trade programmes independently of EU funding. Programmes, which the UK funded as part of the EU, were the WTO's Enhanced Integrated Framework, the World Bank's Trade Facilitation Support Programme and the TMEA programme. Since leaving the EU, we have continued our independent funding to all of these programmes.

16. Aid for Trade projects are, by their nature, long-term and multi-year undertakings. Does the UK have an Aid for Trade Strategy, which considers the necessity for long-term capital? If so, we request that you provide it to us.

A number of key cross-government strategic documents and goals, such as the Economic Development Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals, informs our Aid for Trade approach. We will continue to hone and adapt our Aid for Trade portfolio following the recent publication of the Integrated Review to ensure alignment with our wider global economic development and diplomatic ambitions. Our long-term support of the CDC, the UK's development finance institution, is playing a key role in shoring up critical access to trade finance. This is particularly important in combatting the economic effect of Covid-19 in Africa and South Asia.

Trade Policy

17. In his letter of 5 November 2020, the Minister for Africa stated that the UK is a key trading partner for African nations and that "in the future" it will deepen the existing agreements "to make them even better for business". What has the Government done in this regard, now that the EU transition period has ended? What plans do you have to provide better terms to African trading partners in the future?

The Integrated Review emphasises the importance of revitalising the United Kingdom's economic engagement with Africa. We want to work together to build resilient and productive economies using improved development, investment and financing offers. Trade agreements are important tools to support the delivery of this ambition. We have successfully secured six trade agreements with Sub-Saharan African regions and countries. In addition, we are looking to see how we can improve and deepen these trade arrangements through detailed discussions with our partner countries to support the interests of all parties.

18. What planning and consultation has the Government undertaken on giving better access to Africa's agricultural exports and support the processing in Africa of a greater proportion of its agricultural products?

In addition to our six trade agreements with Sub-Saharan African regions and countries, we also provide duty-free quota-free access to a further 32 Sub-Saharan African countries through our Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). The Government is currently reviewing the UK's GSP, with the aim of making it more generous and simpler for partner countries and businesses to use. We will launch a public consultation on improving the GSP shortly.

Export Credits

19. When will the Government's policy no longer to provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas be implemented?

From 31 March 2021, the UK Government no longer provides new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, other than in limited circumstances. We now align our support to enable clean energy exports. UK Export Finance are leading the global shift to clean growth projects, and by actively seeking to support renewable energy projects overseas, we are also able to help UK exporters tap into the global transition to cleaner fuels.

Remittances

20. Please provide detail on the work the UK is undertaking with the World Bank and through the Financial Sector Deepening Africa programme on reducing the cost of remitting money. How is this distinct from, and co-ordinated with, the work on remittances of the FCDO's Harnessing Innovation for Financial Inclusion programme? What is your assessment of the effectiveness of these programmes to date?

21. Is the Government exploring the possibility of remittance matching?

The Financial Sector Deepening Africa programme (FSDA) works with governments and the private sector to support the necessary regulatory, policy and product changes required to open the African market to low-value cross-border digital remittances. This work is strengthened by the Harnessing Innovation for Financial Inclusion programme (HiFi), delivered through the World Bank Group. This works at a global level to modernise payment infrastructure so that greater levels of remittances can be sent electronically. HiFi also tracks worldwide remittance prices to promote enhanced competition, transparency, and efficiency.

The FCDO oversees both programmes and ensures they work in parallel and activities are sequenced. Thus far, they have supported over 3.5 million individuals to access improved remittances products and services and reduced the cost of remittances in targeted corridors. The UK Government is not presently exploring the possibility of remittance matching.

Mali***22. Are the UK troops deployed to MINUSMA undertaking the operation as envisioned when the deployment was agreed, including long range reconnaissance?***

UK troops are providing long-range reconnaissance capabilities for MINUSMA. The Long-Range Reconnaissance Group (LRRG) has conducted its first UN-tasked mission, operating for 28 days, and have driven over 90,000 km within the operating area. The LRRG remained within a bounded operating envelope based on existing medical provisions, including the UN MEDEVAC's ability to meet medical timelines. UK troops have engaged positively with local communities with which MINUSMA peacekeepers have not previously interacted. LRRG personnel have also engaged effectively with both Mission and personnel from other troop contributing countries, enhancing integration and supporting greater intra-mission coordination.

23. Have UK troops deployed to MINUSMA been provided with the necessary air capability to provide casualty evacuation and troop transport?***24. What consideration, if any, has been given to using the Chinooks provided to Operation Barkhane in support of UK troops deployed to MINUSMA?***

UK personnel have access to a wide range of air and land assets, including UK CH47 helicopters operating under Operation Barkhane, in case of medical emergency. This is a well-rehearsed medical pathway and ensures troops can operate at range, yet still have access to the appropriate medical assets in the event of any incidents.

25. We are concerned that there has been insufficient UK diplomatic and political engagement in seeking a resolution to the situation in Mali. Could you please set out how the UK is contributing to a political settlement, and the diplomatic resources it is providing to this end?

The UK has increased its diplomatic and political engagement in Mali and the broader Sahel over recent years. As a member of the UN Security Council, we play a significant role in the monitoring committee of Mali's Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and in shaping MINUSMA's mandate. We have also increased staffing at the embassy in Mali and in our Sahel Department in London, appointed ambassadors to Niger, Chad and Mauritania, and appointed a London-based Sahel Envoy. We play an active role in the international mechanisms working on the Sahel, including the Sahel Coalition, the Sahel Alliance and the network of Sahel envoys. In recent weeks, the Foreign Secretary and I have both participated in major international meetings on the Sahel.

Through this increased engagement, we have been pushing for a number of steps that would increase chances of a stable political settlement in Mali. This includes: greater clarity on commitments from Sahel governments and international partners - to increase coherence and allow us to hold each other to account on progress; a more integrated and effective approach to stabilisation in Mali and the broader region; increased efforts to tackle impunity for corruption and human rights abuses and violations; and action to improve humanitarian access so that the most vulnerable in Mali, and the broader region, get the support they need.

We have also pressed the Malian transitional government on the importance of organising credible elections within the timeframe of the transition period, and the need for progress on the peace process.

Somalia

26. What actions have been taken in support of peaceful parliamentary and presidential elections in Somalia?

We are disappointed by the two-year extension to the mandates of Mohamed Farmajo as President of Somalia and the Somali Parliament. This is not a solution to the ongoing impasse on the electoral process but instead a move that undermines the credibility of Somalia's leadership and risks the safety, security and future of the Somali people. We have consistently opposed any initiatives leading to a parallel process, partial election or an extension of prior mandates, and continue to urge Somalia's leader to refrain from any further unilateral actions that may escalate political tensions or violence. We urge Somalia's leaders to engage in constructive dialogue to find practical solutions and reach consensus on the remaining issues, demonstrating restraint and compromise.

Our Ambassador to Somalia and her team in the embassy in Mogadishu, in coordination with our international partners, continue to engage intensively with Somalia's leaders on the need to hold inclusive and credible elections as soon as possible. We have leveraged our role as UN Security Council penholder to amplify these messages, including through quarterly discussions on Somalia. We also continue to engage regional partners with relationships with the different Somali actors to encourage constructive and consensual actions.

The UK is a significant donor to the electoral process and have been, more broadly, to the development of inclusive politics and governance. We have contributed to the UN-managed Elections Support Fund that will help finance the direct cost of elections (if consensus can be achieved on the process). We are also providing training on election security to Federal and State Police. In Somaliland, where parliamentary elections are scheduled for 31 May, we have provided £2.1m of funding to support an inclusive process. The code of conduct, Political Parties Code of Conduct for the combined House of Representatives and Local Council Elections in 2021, reiterates their commitment to women and minorities' representation.

However, in the absence of consensus leading to inclusive and credible elections being held without delay, the international community's relationship with Somalia's leadership will change. We are reviewing our support to Somalia and will work with our international partners to ensure a common approach.

Nigeria

27. What current support is provided by the UK Government to Nigeria's security forces?

The UK Government is working with the Nigerian Government in support of efforts to respond to a range of security challenges.

We are providing training to the Armed Forces of Nigeria to help build capacity to respond to the terrorist conflict in the North East and protect civilians. This includes pre-deployment training topics including first aid, human rights compliance and countering improvised explosive devices. All UK-led training teaches International Humanitarian Law and law of armed conflict compliant principles and procedures. We are also providing support to the Multinational Joint Task Force, a regional force coordinating military efforts and security in

the Lake Chad Basin; Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin are in the task force. Areas of future activity include joint operational planning, and strategic communications.

We continue to support long-term defence reform in Nigeria, including through the participation of future Nigerian military leaders in military training courses in the UK. These courses teach high military standards and behaviours, centred on the importance of international human rights and humanitarian law.

We do not directly assist in the conduct of military operations or state security. We do not provide any direct financial support to the military or police.

28. Please provide us with an update on the representations the Government has made to the Nigerian government to support urgent action to secure the release of all those abducted by insurgent groups in Nigeria.

We are deeply concerned by the abduction and continued captivity of schoolchildren by Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) in North East Nigeria. Schoolgirl Leah Sharibu, who was abducted by ISWA in 2018, and a number of the Chibok schoolgirls, abducted by Boko Haram in 2014, are among those still missing. We continue to raise these cases with the Government of Nigeria, most recently in March 2021.

We are also concerned by the recent attacks on schools in Zamfara, Niger and Kaduna State, conducted by criminal groups. I have publicly condemned these attacks, and stressed the importance of all children being able to access an education without fear. The UK Deputy National Security Advisor discussed the abduction of Nigerian schoolboys in Kankara in Katsina State with the President's Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, on 15 December 2020. We have also provided mentoring and capacity building for units of the Nigerian Police Force to improve their anti-kidnap capacity and response to organised crime groups in Nigeria.

Cameroon

29. We are concerned by the ongoing violence in Cameroon. While recognising the importance of Cameroonian participation in counter-terrorism efforts in the Lake Chad region, we urge the Government to use all diplomatic means to press the government of Cameroon to engage in talks with Anglophone leaders. Could you please provide an update on recent engagement to this end?

We regularly discuss the on-going violence with the Government of Cameroon at the highest levels and we have shared our own experience of conflict resolution. On my recent visit to Cameroon in March 2021, I met President Biya and Prime Minister Ngute. I raised our concerns about the crisis and set out the UK's commitment to supporting a peaceful resolution.

30. Is the UK engaging with the US Administration to address the treatment of the Anglophone community in Cameroon, particularly in light of cross-party efforts in Congress to bring greater pressure to bear on the government of Cameroon?

The UK works with international partners, including the US, to raise the North-West, South-West Anglophone crisis in multilateral fora. During my visit to the country, I took the opportunity to discuss the situation in the North-West and South-West regions with the US Embassy team.

31. What is the UK's assessment of the security impact of the conflict in Cameroon on neighbouring countries?

The crisis in the North-West and South-West has caused mass displacement of civilians from these regions. Over 50,000 displaced individuals have fled to neighbouring Nigeria.

The conflict is also damaging the economy of both the North-West and South-West regions and Nigeria, with an increase in illicit cross-border trade and black markets.

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative

32. Please provide us with (1) an update on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) strategy, and (2) details of funding for the PSVI in 2020-21.

PSVI remains a top priority for the FCDO, and we are continuing to develop a new three-year PSVI strategy. This will be underpinned by an evidence-based theory of change. In the last financial year, we allocated £2.6million to PSVI-related activities including funding to support survivors, contributions to international and civil society organisations, and deployments of a team of UK PSVI Experts.

CHOGM

33. Please provide us with an update on (1) how and (2) when the issues of freedom of religion and belief, LGBTQ+ rights and issues relating to the human rights of women and girls have been raised with Commonwealth governments in the run up to CHOGM, and (3) whether these issues will feature on the CHOGM agenda.

The UK Government regularly raises issues around rights and inclusion with Commonwealth countries. We do so bilaterally, in the Commonwealth and in other multilateral fora (for example, through the Universal Periodic Review Process). The UK-funded work of the Equality and Justice Alliance has advanced LGBTQ+, women's and girl's rights and inclusion in a number of Commonwealth countries. Our Commonwealth Equality Project has continued that work. The establishment of a network of Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, with UK support, will promote the role of women in peace-making and peacebuilding.

Other Commonwealth mechanisms such as the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, of which the UK is a member, provides regular opportunities to receive updates from the Commonwealth Secretary-General on developments in member states, including developments which might undermine the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth. Rwanda has set a policy framework for the upcoming CHOGM. One of its five pillars is Governance and Rule of Law. We are using the CHOGM preparatory process to champion equality and inclusion, and will do so at meeting itself. The Women's, Youth and People's Forums at CHOGM will provide opportunities for civil society to promote those issues to Commonwealth Leaders.

I hope these answers provide the Committee with some further clarification in lieu of the debate.

Yours sincerely,



James Duddridge MP
Minister for Africa