

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 1223 Email: indcom@parliament.uk Website: www.parliament.uk/indcom Twitter: [@CommonsIDC](https://twitter.com/CommonsIDC)

From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Sir Philip Barton

Permanent Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

By email

17 May 2021

FCDO Main Estimates 2021-22

Dear Sir Philip,

Thank you for sending me the Explanatory Memorandum for the FCDO's 2021-22 Main Estimates last week. The Committee takes great interest in the content of the Memorandum, as a key indication of the FCDO's spending plans and priorities for its first full financial year as a newly merged department.

Whilst I understand that a departmental merger requires changes to the structure of the Estimates, I was disappointed to see that the level of detail provided on spending related to international development activity has decreased following revisions to the budget sub-head detail. Notably, a single budget line – 'Strategic priorities and other programme spending', now contains the following former sub-heads relating to international development expenditure:

- Policy Priorities, International Organisations and Humanitarian
- Regional Programmes
- Other Central Programmes

HM Treasury highlights in its [estimates guidance](#) the need to consult with HM Treasury and the relevant departmental select committee in the House of Commons on changes to the Estimate, including sub-head detail. It further states that the precise content of each Estimates memorandum should reflect the interests of the select committee. Unfortunately, the lack of detail falls short of what the International Development Committee would expect to see – particularly during a time of unprecedented reductions in UK expenditure on overseas aid.

I would be grateful if you could provide a more detailed breakdown of the budget sub-head 'Strategic priorities and other programme spending', and also ensure that in future there is more granular information on spending plans relating to overseas aid in the Estimates Memorandum – particularly in the area of humanitarian aid. The Committee would welcome the opportunity to discuss the format of future Estimates Memoranda.

I would be grateful if I could receive your response by 7 June 2021. The Committee intends to publish your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S', on a light blue background.

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee