

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From Sarah Champion MP, Chair of the International Development Committee

Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE

Permanent Under Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

By email

22 June 2021

FCDO Main Estimates 2021-22

Dear Sir Philip,

Thank you for your response to my letter regarding the Department's Main Estimate Memorandum for 2021-22, and for the additional detail you provided on Departmental spending plans.

Whilst I understand that a new estimates structure needed to be created to reflect the spending of the newly merged department, the Committee regards the new structure as more than just the technical rationalisation that you state in your letter. The way that budget sub-heads have now been merged and the absence of detailed information or narrative on ODA and humanitarian expenditure presents a significant challenge to Parliamentary scrutiny.

You correctly identify that the HM Treasury [estimates guidance](#) only states that the Department 'may' need to consult the Committee on changes to the Estimate. However, as stated in my initial letter, the lack of detail falls short of what we would expect to see – particularly given the rapid reductions in ODA expenditure and the high level of committee and public interest in this area. The estimates guidance is clear that the content of the memorandum should reflect the interests of the select committee, and as such, we regard the change as sufficiently material and substantive to have merited consultation.

I would therefore request that FCDO officials engage with my Committee staff alongside the House of Commons Scrutiny Unit, with a view to discussing how future Estimates memoranda can be changed to better reflect the interests of the Committee and to improve transparency over spending plans. The International Development Committee staff can be contacted at indcom@parliament.uk.

I would be grateful if I could receive your response by 1 July. The Committee intends to publish your response.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee