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30 March 2023

Dear Sarah,

UK aid for refugee host countries: Jordan and Lebanon

Thank you for putting questions to me in writing on UK aid for refugee host countries. I would also like to reiterate my apologies that I was unable to attend the Ministerial session on Tuesday 21 March.

Please see the department's responses attached to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

FCDO RESPONSES

UK support for refugee host countries

1. What assessment have you made of the impact of the cuts to UK ODA funding for Jordan and Lebanon since 2019-20 on displaced people and host communities?

JORDAN

The UK's humanitarian programmes have remained effective in recent years, despite a decrease in the original budgets as a result of the UK's decision to reduce ODA to 0.5% of GNI. Humanitarian programming has been prioritised and protected as much as possible when applying the budget reductions.

During the period 2018/19 to 2021/22 the UK maintained its support to Jordan, contributing to food security and to meeting the basic needs of Jordan's most vulnerable refugees and host communities. Since 2019, UK support through cash assistance has reached up to 123,000 families each year, has supported over 150,000 refugee children to access education each year, and provided 65,600 people with lifesaving social protection support.

We acknowledge that the World Food Programme has reduced the value of the cash assistance provided to refugees since summer 2022. This decision was made to ensure coverage could still reach as many households as possible. The UK continues to support refugees with cash assistance. We are also pivoting our development portfolio in Jordan to strengthen its national systems so that they can provide more sustainable services and support for refugees and vulnerable Jordanians alike. Syrians have been displaced in Jordan for over ten years, with little prospect of safe and dignified returns in the near future. With over 80% of refugees living in host communities it is critical that the international community (including the UK) supports Jordan's national systems and adopts a sustainable approach that can support all vulnerable people in the country for the foreseeable future. The UK is leading the way on this including through:

- A new £65m social protection programme (Strengthening Societal and Economic Resilience in Jordan – SSERJ) which will launch a pilot phase to demonstrate the feasibility of incorporating refugees into national social security systems.
- A new £30m education programme (BRIDGE) will enable refugee children to receive 12 years of education and support the Ministry of Education (MoE) to improve the curricula and facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities into schools.
- The UK will continue to strengthen Jordan's systems and use positions like our role as co-Chair of the Education and Social Protection Donor groups to coordinate donor support behind this important agenda.

Making assessments on how recent events, including Covid-19 and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, are impacting poverty on a national level is an important priority, and one that must be led by the Government of Jordan (GoJ). I was in Jordan in February this year where I pressed Ministers to publish up to date poverty statistics that consider vulnerable Jordanians, migrant workers and refugees. I have offered UK support to develop and implement this.

LEBANON

Development and humanitarian ODA funding is only one aspect of the UK's support to Lebanon. Our CSSF funding to Lebanon is the largest in the MENA region (£15.9m for FY22/23: £8m ODA; £7.9m non-ODA). These programmes have helped support Lebanese security institutions (vital to stability) as well governance and transparency and women's empowerment. And our diplomatic engagement continues to urge progress on political, economic, and social policy reforms that are the only way out of the country's worsening crisis. The wider work of the British Embassy in Beirut – including security, defence, and trade cooperation – continues to prioritise Lebanon's stability. This is critical for the country as a whole, including displaced people living there.

Although UK bilateral ODA funding has reduced since 2019-20, it remains focused on reducing poverty and targeted towards the most vulnerable. A smaller budget reduces the scale of results we can achieve directly in terms of alleviating humanitarian needs and tackling poverty. However, we are increasingly playing a catalytic and enabling role, deploying targeted technical assistance, at relatively low cost, to help improve the overall impact and efficiency of humanitarian and development action. This includes supporting the coordination and efficiency of cash assistance to refugees and driving a gender-inclusive approach to social protection mechanisms. Our development and humanitarian expertise are highly valued by the international donor community, reflected in the UK's election as co-chair this year of the international Donor Working Group despite our budget cuts.

a. What political, economic or security risks have you identified as a result of reduced UK funding for Jordan and Lebanon since 2019-20?

JORDAN

Unlike other neighbouring countries, there has not been an uptick in anti-refugee rhetoric in Jordan. A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) survey in 2022 revealed a positive attitude towards refugees from Jordanians. The survey demonstrated that 92 percent of Jordanians say that they are sympathetic towards refugees and 76 percent of Jordanians believe that the Government's approach towards refugees has been positive, echoing the results of surveys conducted in June 2021 and December 2020. This is in part due to the critical work that the UK and other donors have done to support Jordan to maintain economic stability and to support the services that have been strained by the increased number of beneficiaries.

However, the survey also revealed indications of growing fatigue among the Jordanian host community emerging. Some respondents believe that the Government of Jordan has done more than it needs to help refugees. More respondents agreed with the statement that Jordan should focus on helping Jordanians, not refugees, than in previous years. This makes the UK's approach of using our ODA budget to support Jordan's systems to serve both Jordanians and vulnerable refugees an essential approach to maintain stability and service provision across host communities in Jordan.

Jordan's public debt is approaching 89 percent debt to GDP. While the government has been recognised for its prudent macroeconomic management, as reflected in the 'stable' outlook for Jordan granted by most credit ratings agencies in their 2022/23 assessments, there is a concern that Jordan's economy remains fragile and a risk for the country's stability. This requires continued support through the donor community

and International Financial Institutions. The UK is working to deliver this and has implemented a range of activities to support Jordan's macroeconomic stability (see question 2 for more detail).

Jordan hosting over 650,000 registered Syrian refugees remains one of the key economic challenges facing the country. The Government of Jordan (GoJ) estimates that the budgetary cost of hosting the Syrian population has been around US\$1.4 billion per annum. The economic challenges of hosting the Syrian refugee population in Jordan have been exacerbated by several external additional shocks over the past few years including economic pressures from Covid-19 as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These shocks have deepened political and social challenges and increased the need to continue to support Jordan economically. The economy has not been able to create the large number of productive jobs required to meet the needs of the young and fast-growing population. The unemployment challenge in Jordan is acute (at 23 percent overall and around 50 percent amongst the youth population). Improving stability, growth and creating jobs is essential, and the UK is supporting a number of activities that will do this, including a Youth Tech and Jobs programme that will increase accesses to digitally enabled income opportunities, for young people (see question 2 for more detail).

LEBANON

Lebanon is facing a combined economic, political, and humanitarian crisis. As these issues worsen, there is the potential for security risks also to increase.

The crisis reflects a nexus of deep-rooted factors (political, constitutional, governance, etc) and has not been exacerbated by reduced UK ODA. We continue to urge the Government of Lebanon to implement economic, governance, and social policy reforms necessary for a sustainable and inclusive recovery, and long-term stability.

Jordan

2. Hosting refugees in Jordan has contributed to water shortages, energy supply challenges and high rates of unemployment. How is the UK helping Jordan to address those challenges?

Water shortages, energy supply challenges and higher rates of unemployment are longstanding issues in Jordan. Even prior to the Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan had a history of economic constraints and structural threats to its environment and natural resource management. It has long been a resource-poor country with limited access to water, oil, and other natural resources. Large budget deficits and high unemployment in Jordan also predate the arrival of Syrian refugees. For instance, Jordan had a high rate of unemployment even during a period of high economic growth (2005 to 2009), indicating that unemployment issue in Jordan is a structural labour market issue. Hosting refugees has added to existing structural challenges in Jordan but is not the principal driver of many of Jordan's challenges.

To ensure we can respond to these structural challenges, the UK's ODA portfolio in Jordan spans a range that includes humanitarian support, social protection, education, and economic stability. Through our high-level diplomacy and regular strategic dialogues we also engage with the Government of Jordan and Royal Hashemite Court on the challenges Jordan faces on water, energy, jobs and the economy.

We recognise the pressure of water scarcity in Jordan and are helping the Jordanian Government reform its energy and water sectors to be more financially and environmentally sustainable to benefit refugees and Jordanians alike. Through the Jordan Investment and Economic Reform advisory programme (JIERAP), the UK is providing £14m to support a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for technical assistance to the Jordanian Government. The technical support includes on energy supply and financial sustainability. Notably, studies on the cost of service and tariffs, gas distribution, and green hydrogen.

The UK is also supporting Jordan's climate adaptation through the PHENOMENAL programme, which covers key sectors of Jordan's national adaptation plan including supporting the transition towards electric vehicles and promoting community-led nature-based solutions. This includes a waste-water plant and technical support to strengthen water management.

Through the Jordan Compact Economic Opportunities Programme (2016-2025) the UK is supporting Jordan to mitigate the unemployment and water challenges among Jordanians and refugees through a series of reforms and projects:

- Introducing reforms to allow Syrian refugees access to formal employment through issuing free work permits to work in specific sectors (construction, agriculture and manufacturing) and supporting investment facilitation to Jordan.
- Supporting the Youth Tech and Jobs project through the World Bank, which supports Jordan's digital and entrepreneurial ecosystem to increase access to digitally enabled income opportunities for youth, including Syrian refugees.
- Supporting solid waste and wastewater infrastructure due to pressures from population increases and hosting refugees. Through European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the UK is supporting the construction of Ain Ghazal Wastewater pipeline that connects Amman to the wastewater works at As Samra to increase its capacity to transport and treat wastewater.
- Other smaller scale projects through the EBRD which support employment, upskilling, and economic inclusion of refugees, as well as build capability on investment promotion.

- a. **On the recent IDC visit to Jordan, we visited Za'atari refugee camp where more than a decade ago the international community helped to construct housing units and basic infrastructure. Those facilities are now past their use-by-date and need replacing. Is the UK and the international community willing to provide the ongoing funding required to maintain the camp?**

Whilst the camps have provided many vulnerable people with shelter, services and a safe haven they are also difficult places to live. Therefore, the UK is investing an increasing proportion of its funding towards integrating refugees within the host community, which will support them to contribute to local communities and economies as market actors.

While the Jordanian Government has taken steps to address the needs of refugees, there is still much work to be done. In order for the country to continue to provide assistance to refugees and to promote development, it is essential that the government and international partners continue support through an evolved approach that combines humanitarian aid and development assistance to promote long-term solutions and reduce the vulnerability of people affected by displacement and conflict.

Through the UK's support to UNICEF Jordan during the period 2016–2019 we funded water, sanitation, and hygiene activities in both Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps. This 3-year programme provided water supply and sanitation to over 147,000 Syrian refugees and was critical in replacing unsustainable water trucking in camps with water infrastructure that is more durable and offers better value for money.

The UK is working with the international community to collaborate with the Jordanian Government to help them adopt these sustainable solutions. Currently, the UK is identifying opportunities to implement more durable solutions to address the protracted refugee crisis in Jordan through its humanitarian programming, which could contribute to the economic inclusion of refugees and to increase refugee self-reliance. This complements existing interventions in social protection and education by strengthening opportunities for refugees to integrate into Jordan's systems.

b. What plans do the UK and the international community have to improve access to tertiary education and graduate jobs for refugees in Jordan?

While the UK prioritises access to 12 years of quality education from ages 5-17, the FCDO Girls Education Directorate (GED) is looking into opportunities to support greater tertiary education in the future. We are also leveraging our influence and support of wider education stakeholders in Jordan – such as UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and British Council – to support efforts led by the Jordanian Ministry of Education (MoE) to increase access to tertiary education.

The UK is working with the Accelerating Access to Education Initiative (AAI) to improve access for Syrian refugee children to vocational and skills pathways as part of our £30m education programme (BRIDGE).

The Government of Jordan has maintained its commitment to provide access to basic education in public schools and camps with the support of the international community. The Government annually waives documentation to allow this access and is supportive in ensuring refugee children have access to same exams (Tawjihi), non-formal education, online learning during Covid-19 and remedial learning post Covid-19. The UK and international community have continued to provide support to Jordan to enable access to basic education services ensuring boys and girls receive 12 years of quality education. We work closely and coordinate our support with international partners who are working on tertiary education and vocational training such as Germany and the EU.

The UK is supporting the Youth Tech and Jobs (YTJ) project via the World Bank to provide people with appropriate skills to secure jobs. This project is introducing a digital curriculum, to be rolled out during 2023-24 to grades 7-12 (ages 12-17) that will help Jordanian and refugee students be better prepared for the needs of the labour market after graduation. Additionally, the YTJ project is supporting opportunities that will enable youth and graduates (both Jordanian and refugees) to be self-employed. This is done through supported civil society platforms and the establishment of 'tech-hubs' in underserved communities. The YTJ project builds on what has been introduced in the Jordan Compact Programme for Results since 2016, to enable Syrian refugees to work in the formal economy with a specific focus on digitally enabled sectors.

The UK is currently looking at supporting the World Food Programme in a skills mapping exercise, to gauge the vulnerability, skills, capabilities, and opportunities of the registered refugee population. The exercise will help us target our cash assistance more efficiently to the most vulnerable and help potential employers in local labour markets to recruit refugees into specific roles based on their skills. If appropriate, this data will be used to support greater advocacy around opening more sectors of the economy to refugee labour supply.

3. To what extent have the commitments agreed in the Jordan Compact been kept by a) the UK, b) the international community and c) the Jordanian Government?

The 'Jordan Compact' (adopted at the 2016 Syria Conference in London) and the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) are two inter-related strategies that have been developed to address the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Jordan caused by the influx of Syrian refugees and set out Jordan's plans and needs from the international community. Since the inception of the Jordan Compact, the humanitarian response has been funded significantly by the international community, including large contributions from the UK, USA, EU, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and France. However, donor funding to Jordan is competing against other emerging global crises and so shifting to a more sustainable approach that ensures ODA delivers the maximum benefits for both vulnerable Jordanians and refugees will be critical. That is why the UK is prioritising strengthening Jordan's national systems.

The Jordan compact has three pillars:

Pillar 1: Turning the refugee crisis into a development opportunity through new investments and creating jobs for refugees and Jordanians. The Jordanian Government, through the UK-funded Jordan Compact Economic Opportunities Programme (JCEOP), has made several positive steps and reforms to integrate the Syrian refugees into the formal economy and facilitate Syrian refugees access to the labour market. This included allowing refugees to start businesses, (including home-based businesses) and supporting access for refugees to free work permits in specific occupations. However, there have been notable challenges, including issues with refugees taking up work permit opportunities and challenges opening a wider range of occupations for refugees to access the formal labour market. The UK is considering opportunities to support further strengthening refugee access to the labour market as it considers the successor to the £80m humanitarian cash programme which will end this year.

Pillar 2: Rebuilding Jordanian host communities, including their resilience. UK grant financing has been critical to support host communities and refugees alike access essential services. Education support has provided 150,000 children each year with access to a quality education. Our economic portfolio has supported the establishment of critical infrastructure, including a new wastewater pipeline. With more limited resources we have ensured UK ODA is agile and able to respond to Jordan's needs, including by providing £34m in emergency social protection support to ensure 300,000 households could manage the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This increased access to cash and services is essential for host community resilience. Jordan has made significant commitments in this space, including providing refugees with access to subsidised healthcare and education through national systems, and

working with donors to ensure these systems can meet the increased demand. Jordan has several strategies to further develop this approach, including the Education Strategic Plan (2022-25), the National Strategy for Women (2020-25), National Strategy for Youth (2019-25) and National Social Protection Strategy (2019-25).

Pillar 3: Mobilising grants and concessional financing and supporting Jordan's macroeconomic stability. The UK has provided targeted technical advisory support to the Ministry of Finance on macroeconomic stability. This has helped ensure Jordan remains on track in delivering the benchmarks of its IMF Extended Fund Facility programme. This has included challenging reforms on tax compliance and on electricity tariffs. In summer 2022 Jordan successfully issued a Eurobond of US \$650m, which was oversubscribed, indicating the confidence of investors and markets in Jordan's macroeconomic stability. The issuance of the Eurobond, and the successful completion of the IMF's fifth review means that Jordan continues to enjoy the status of having one of the most successfully implemented IMF programmes in the world and is an outlier in the region for its robust macroeconomic management. The UK will continue to support Jordan to balance its focus on macroeconomic stability with reforms that target pro-poor growth, including by launching an International Growth Centre later this year to provide actionable research to stimulate growth and address unemployment. The UK also provided Jordan with essential access to finance through a loan guarantee, providing access to an additional US \$225m as part of a \$950m World Bank loan. This enabled Jordan to maintain its macroeconomic stability and implement critical reforms.

a. Has Jordan received the investment, grants and concessional finance it was promised in the Jordan Compact?

Through the Jordan Compact, the UK has:

- Increased availability of concessional loans to the government of Jordan. The UK has invested in this, including through the World Bank (WB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The UK invested in WB programmes which include: 1) the Jordan Compact Programme for Results (£111.5m loan and foregone interest); 2) A Development Policy Loan (£46m grant); 3) and the Youth Tech and Jobs Programme for Results (£29m grant). Through the EBRD, the UK invested £30m to support infrastructure projects in the solid waste management and wastewater management to mitigate pressures from an increased population and refugees. UK funding triggered over \$1 billion in additional financing from the World Bank and the EBRD to drive key economic reforms and support Jordan's balance of payments and sustain public finances.
- Supported international investment, notably through the World Bank Jordan Compact Programme for Results, which provided technical assistance to the Jordan Investment Commission (JIC). The UK, through EBRD, is currently supporting the Ministry of Investment to target investment from priority European markets (UK, Germany and Netherlands) of Jordan's 2024-2027 Investment Promotion Strategy.
- The UK has provided significant humanitarian support to Jordan, including through an £80m five-year humanitarian cash assistance programme (2019 to 2024). We continue to work closely with the Jordanian Government and the international community to support refugees and build more resilient host communities, as set out in questions one and two.

b. What lessons have you learned from implementing the Jordan Compact on how to provide long-term, predictable support for partnering with new countries hosting displaced people and refugees?

The Compact has been instrumental in helping Jordan to provide services and assistance to refugees:

- It established a framework for regional cooperation among participating states and took a holistic approach to addressing the refugee crisis by including access to work, mobility, financial services, education, health, housing, and social integration services, as well as issues related to social cohesion and tensions with host communities.
- The Compact showed that, by building on existing political support amongst donor governments, international organisations and host governments, funds can be mobilised in a short space of time to support countries hosting a large influx of refugees in a targeted way.
- Another success was that implementing the Jordan Compact and the underpinning key economic reforms created benefits that go beyond the refugee community. For instance, support to Jordan's macroeconomic stability through technical assistance and concessional financing.

However, after several years of the Compact, some challenges remain, and the following lessons were identified:

- There are still gaps in ensuring widespread access to quality education (especially at tertiary level), sustainable livelihood opportunities that can lead to self-reliance, and securing tangible improvements in the daily lives of Syrian refugees. The UK's ODA portfolio is pivoting to address these.
- The relaxed rules of origin (RoO) agreement between Jordan and the EU to create employment for Jordanians and Syrian refugees, attract investment and increase exports has only had a minimal effect and is currently being reviewed by UNHCR to see if it can be revitalised. The UK is now considering its own RoO and what can be done to encourage refugee employment under its new bilateral Association Agreement.
- The Jordanian Government should continue to revise and adapt its response to the refugee crisis to enable further progress. The Jordan Response Plan is a separate document that outlines Jordanian Government's response to the Syrian refugee crisis. This is undergoing revision over the 2023-24 period and the UK is working alongside the Government of Jordan to ensure it reflects the current needs, including on strengthening Jordan's national systems.
- Our response must evolve in protracted crises. Over ten years since the arrival of Syrian refugees, it is important to further strengthen integration of refugees into Jordan's economy. The UK has led a process of sector deep dives, alongside the World Bank, to reflect on the successes and opportunities of this integration. We are talking with the Government of Jordan on how these lessons can inform the revision of the Jordan Response Plan that will happen this year.
- More needs to be done to facilitate Syrian refugees' access to the labour market to promote economic self-reliance and enable them to contribute to Jordan's development.
- The Jordanian economy has been growing at an average of 2% a year since 2010 and is not creating enough jobs for all working-age people. About 80% of Syrian refugees in Jordan still live below the poverty line. Interventions to

stimulate growth, such as the UK supported Youth, Tech and Jobs programme, are critical.

Lebanon

4. How has a) UK and b) the international community repositioned their programming in Lebanon to incorporate the humanitarian needs of the host community into the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan?

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) includes both refugee populations and host communities. According to the UN, between 2015 and June 2022, Lebanon received over US\$8.2 billion from donors to support vulnerable people (Lebanese and refugees) under the LCRP.

The UK's Lebanon Host Community Support Programme, delivered in partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), is an example of our long-standing support to host communities and work to reduce inter-community tensions. Since its inception in 2014, UK funding has:

- Improved infrastructure in over 220 municipalities;
- Helped create over 1,580 new jobs for both Lebanese and Syrian communities;
- Supported nearly 500 small and medium enterprises; and,
- Reduced perceptions of community tension in target municipalities.

Between 2014 and 2021, this programme, with contributions from other donors as well as the UK, reached over 2.9 million people with 667 projects focussed on providing basic services and creating livelihood opportunities.

Lebanon is facing a growing humanitarian crisis of its own. In response, the UN and NGOs developed an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) in 2021. This was intended to provide time-bound humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Lebanese and migrants – complementing the LCRP. Between August 2021 and December 2022, donors provided over \$350m to address urgent needs in areas including food security, health, and education. As needs continue to grow amongst Lebanese as well as refugees and other vulnerable groups, and the crisis becomes protracted, we are supporting the UN-led process to bring greater coordination and alignment between the LCRP (which includes more development-focussed interventions) and the ERP.

a. What lessons have you learned from the situation in Lebanon about how to build resilience in future crisis responses to ensure that displaced people and host communities receive adequate support, if the host country becomes destabilised?

The compounded crises in Lebanon and rising needs among all population groups have highlighted the need to:

- pivot the humanitarian response away from status-based (refugee vs host) to needs-based, ensuring aid is prioritised to the most vulnerable;
- accompany that humanitarian response with targeted support to maintain and rebuild stability in the host country.

b. How will those lessons learned be embedded in future responses to refugee crises?

In Lebanon we intend to target future humanitarian support (subject to ongoing business planning and budget allocation processes) on the basis of vulnerability. We continue to work with the Government of Lebanon and international partners to strengthen national systems, for example social protection and education, to support medium-longer term recovery and resilience. And we will maintain our support to maintain and rebuild stability. This reflects the lessons learned in the UK's broader response to future crises, including refugee crises, set out in our Humanitarian Framework which aims to better prevent, anticipate and prepare for new crises, and rebuild resilience in protracted and recurrent crises.

5. What recent representations have you made to the Government of Lebanon on reopening schools for Lebanese children and refugees?

Together with the World Bank and UNICEF, the UK have been in intense and constant dialogue at the highest levels in recent weeks, including with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education and Higher Education, to support the timely reopening of schools for Lebanese and refugee children. The UK is one of the only bilateral donors to have this level of dialogue with the Ministry of Education.

In March, the UK, supported by the World Bank, UNICEF and the EU, approved the repurposing of funding to support eligible teachers and school personnel, who have seen their salaries devalue significantly due to the economic crisis, to return to work. Similar action last year was widely credited with saving the school year for some 500,000 school-goers. We continue to urge the Government of Lebanon to prioritise funding to enable schools to remain open.

a. What recent representations have you made to the Government of Lebanon on allowing the registration of refugees and supporting refugees' access to legal residency and civil documentation?

We urge the Government of Lebanon to ensure all displaced people in Lebanon can continue to live in safety and have access to all of their rights. We are active in supporting collective donor and UNHCR dialogue with the Government on these issues.

b. What recent representations have you made to the Government of Lebanon on allowing the UNHCR to monitor refugee movements across the border with Syria?

UNHCR's access to border crossing points was reinstated last year.

Support for Palestinians

6. Given the current political and security context in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, is supporting the two-state solution a credible policy position?

The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

The two-state solution is the only viable long-term solution. We continue to believe a two-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation, deliver

Palestinian self-determination and to preserve Israel's security and democratic identity. The United Kingdom remains a strong supporter of all efforts to promote peace. Our position was reflected in our support for UN Security Council Resolution 2334 on 23 December 2016. In addition, support for a two-state solution remains the policy of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

7. How is the FCDO supporting the work of the Consul General in East Jerusalem, including efforts to oppose settlement building across the West Bank?

The UK Consul-General and her staff in Jerusalem have the full support of the FCDO. Unlike many other consulate-generals in the FCDO's network, the British Consulate General Jerusalem is a sovereign post not subordinate to an embassy or high commission. Of course, however, the Consul-General and her staff work closely with colleagues in the British Embassy Tel Aviv, particularly on issues related to the peace process and the occupation. Like other overseas missions, BCG Jerusalem's Country Business Plan is agreed centrally with the FCDO and with Whitehall partners. Its communications strategy is agreed with FCDO and the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

As well as regular Ministerial and Senior Official visits to Jerusalem to support the work of the Consul General, Ministers regularly speak internationally on related issues.

On 14 March, the Foreign Secretary set out the UK's view on the proposed E1 settlement expansion to Parliament:

"In my most recent conversations with the Israeli Foreign Minister, I raised our concerns about the speculation of settlement building on the E1 territories in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I am pleased that there has now been a moratorium on such expansions, because to do so would be damaging to the prospects of a sustainable two-state solution."

The UK has also condemned settler violence and inflammatory language. The Foreign Secretary stated to Parliament on 14 March:

"As I have said in answer to other questions, we have made it clear that the language used with regard to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories needs to be de-escalatory. It needs to be carefully thought through. Inflammatory language, as we have seen, is unacceptable. The behaviour of those settlers is unacceptable. That has been recognised by the Israeli authorities and we want to make sure that those people are held to account for the actions they have taken. We will always seek to reinforce the viability of a future Palestinian state as part of a sustainable two-state solution. The decision with regard to settlement goods is long standing and we do not speculate about any changes to those positions."

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, visited Israel and the OPTs in January 2023. He reiterated to his counterparts UK support to the Middle East Peace Process and the two-state solution.

Lord Ahmad also set out UK's opposition to expansion of settlements in a call with Israeli ambassador to the UK on 16 Feb.

Lord Ahmad set out the UK's concern at the scenes of abhorrent violence in Huwara in his tweet of 26 February. The UK also condemned in the strongest terms the retaliatory incidents of violence by settlers against Palestinians and stresses the importance of the

Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. As Lord Ahmad stated on 26 February, the deadly cycle of violence must end.

At the UNSC the FCDO makes a statement at the monthly MEPP briefing.

On 14 February the UK joined a quint statement (France, Germany, Italy, US and UK) opposing Israeli settlement expansion. On 4 March, the UK joined a statement by the governments of France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain opposing Israeli settlement expansion and settler violence.

a. What actions is the UK taking to mitigate legal challenges and Israeli interference with Palestinian and international NGOs providing humanitarian assistance to communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

We have been clear that we do not support the Israeli government's decision last year to designate six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organisations. The subsequent raids on the offices of seven Palestinian NGOs (as well as on St Andrew's Anglican Church in Ramallah), and arrests of their staff, are equally concerning. We have not changed our approach, based on the information provided by the Government of Israel and we continue to engage with a number of these organisations.

Civil society organisations play an important role in upholding human rights and democracy, and they must be able to operate freely in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Officials at the British Embassy Tel Aviv, alongside our European partners, have directly raised our concerns with the Israeli Government on the designations, and made clear our support for Civil Society Organisations in Israel and the OPTs. The evidence which forms the basis for this decision is a matter for the Government of Israel. The UK maintains its own criteria for designation.

More broadly, UK supports the work of Palestinian and International NGOs operating in the OPTs through funding some of them to deliver UK programming, through engaging them at Consulate civil society roundtables and other events, by showing public support for their work through our communications channels and inviting them to meet senior officials and Ministers.

b. What assessment has the FCDO made of the potential risks of reductions in UNRWA programming and services for Palestinians across the region?

The UK recognises UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. UNRWA is also a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the region. The UK's annual contribution to UNRWA's programme budget helps UNRWA to provide basic education to more than 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls), access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and social safety net assistance for around 390,000 of the most vulnerable across the region. We recognise that UNRWA needs to be on a more secure financial footing, to ensure that Palestinian refugees' basic needs are met.

For 2023, UNRWA is seeking US\$ 1.6 billion for its programmes and operations. If UNRWA lacks sufficient funding, the agency will be unable to deliver its mandate granted by the UN General Assembly to provide protection, health, and education

services to over 5.9m refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and Gaza which could fuel greater instability across a fragile region. Reduction in donor funding could also negatively impact the human development indicators of Palestinian refugees (i.e. resulting in de-development) due to:

- Inability to hire additional staff to meet school enrolment needs, which could lead to larger class size and a further increase in the double and triple shifting of classes in school;
- Inability to hire the necessary number of doctors, nurse and health staff, which could lead to reduced quality and fewer women receiving antenatal and postnatal care;
- Fewer poor Palestinian refugees receiving relief assistance; and
- Insufficient number of sanitation labourers leading to reduced sanitation and waste management services that could result in health and environmental hazards.

c. What steps is the UK taking to help strengthen the long-term financial position of UNRWA?

We recognise that UNRWA needs to be on a more secure financial footing, to ensure that Palestinian refugees' basic needs are met. To that end, the UK is working with UNRWA and other donors as an Advisory Commission member to help ensure its sustainability. This includes broadening UNRWA's donor base, encouraging multi-year funding, and providing technical support to the agency.

Global Refugee Forum

8. What key messages does the FCDO plan to take to the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023?

The UK sees the Global Refugee Forum as an important opportunity to set out our commitments to international engagement on refugees and forced displacement, as a key strategic issue across the globe: for displaced people, host communities and donors. In line with our UK strategic objectives and UNHCR's priorities, we are currently considering what pledges we will announce at the Forum.

a. Crisis Response Plans are chronically underfunded. Does the international community need a new approach to supporting refugee host countries to strengthen collective responsibility?

The Global Compact on Refugees responded to the need for a new approach to supporting refugee hosting countries, recognising the need for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. The FCDO strongly supports the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, and our approach to refugee and forced displacement recognises the importance of increased refugee self-reliance through supporting expanded access for refugees to opportunities and services; we believe that inclusion provides protection for refugees and eases pressure on host countries, particularly given increasingly protracted displacement and stretched humanitarian funding globally, including for crisis response plans.

Recognising our responsibility as a donor, we are proud of our role as a significant provider of multi-year, unearmarked funding to UNHCR – having provided over £400 million over the last five years. However, acknowledging that the unprecedented level

of displacement has created a significant funding gap, we are also strongly supportive of calls to expand the donor base and to increase the role of development actors in displacement situations.

9. No refugee chooses to leave home. How can diplomatic solutions to crises be more effectively incorporated into crisis responses to enable displaced communities to return home?

Diplomatic solutions to conflict and crises are required in crisis responses, as, ultimately, they create an environment where forcibly displaced people can voluntarily return home in safety and dignity. The FCDO supports the voluntary return of forcibly displaced people and recognises the responsibility of the international community to help to create the conditions that make these returns possible. However, as UNHCR High Commissioner Grandi himself has recognised, whilst support to voluntary return is critically important work, it is often the most elusive. We have created the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation & Mediation (OCSM) as the dedicated home for policy thinking on the UK's approach to conflict, developing a more integrated UK approach to conflict and instability, working across the FCDO, HMG and beyond to harness conflict expertise and apply it where the UK can make the most difference. As the FCDO we use all the levers available to us to support favourable outcomes for displaced communities; indeed, the merging of FCO and DFID has also brought our development and diplomacy efforts closer to enable us to work more effectively in this space.

a. At the start of a displacement crisis, how do the FCDO and the international community assess whether the situation will require a long-term sustainable development response?

FCDO is committed to delivering fast and effective humanitarian responses to displacement crises, while ensuring that this is coordinated with broader development efforts to support forcibly displaced people and their host communities in the longer term.

It can be challenging in the initial stages of a crisis response to assess whether a situation will require a long-term development response, particularly when driven by factors such as conflict. Through our posts and our central humanitarian and geographic teams, however, we stay in close touch with bilateral and multilateral partners, particularly the UN system, on any given crisis, sharing analysis and exploring scenarios. The UK benefits from helping to shape the international response and understanding of humanitarian crises.

b. Should the FCDO and the international community embed a long-term strategy in every crisis response?

As set out in our Humanitarian Framework, we are strengthening long-term strategy in crisis response. We are working to promote a shift among multilateral, International Financial Institutions, development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian partners to better prevent, anticipate and prepare for new crises, and rebuild resilience in protracted and recurrent crises.

10. Is it more effective to incorporate displaced people and refugees into national social security programmes and infrastructure networks than to set up parallel systems, such as those provided by UNRWA?

We consider integrating forcibly displaced communities into national social protection systems and infrastructure networks to be a more effective and efficient approach than reliance on humanitarian support alone. There is increasing recognition of the development challenges posed by large refugee situations and the advantages of shared and inclusive economic growth in refugee-hosting areas from which all can benefit, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

a. What are the political and economic challenges involved in giving refugees and displaced communities access to national social security systems and infrastructure networks?

82% of refugees are hosted in Low/Middle-Income Countries (LMICs); this creates political and economic challenges for hosting countries in supporting integration. The economic and political challenges stem from a willingness or ability of hosting governments to integrate forcibly displaced communities when national systems may already be fragile and under strain and wanting to ensure return to country of origin remains the long-term solution. Therefore, LMIC hosting governments require support from the international community to strengthen national policies and institutions for the resilience of local and refugee communities. This is why the international community supported the setup of a World Bank-led refugee financing instrument (the refugee sub-window) with a funding envelope of \$2.4bn to provide development funding to help eligible host countries create meaningful medium- to long-term development opportunities and sustainable solutions for refugees and host populations.

b. How can the international community incorporate local civil society organisations more effectively into crisis responses to build long-term resilience among refugees and host communities?

The UK remains committed to localisation, as it empowers the community as a whole to have a say in decisions that affect them. 'Placing agency at the centre of our approach' is a key pillar of the [UK Humanitarian Framework](#). It sets our commitment to ensure international responses, the humanitarian system and coordination mechanisms, reflect better the voices, needs, experiences, and aspirations of affected populations, in particular marginalised people including women and girls, and of civil society, including women-led organisations.

The UK is a signatory to the Grand Bargain, Grand Bargain 2.0 and Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, which include explicit commitments on localisation, as well as the OECD DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance.

Examples of UK action include:

- In July 2020 the UK published [guidelines](#) on how to embed localisation in social protection programmes during Covid-19 and in October 2020 it launched its new [humanitarian response funding guidelines](#) for NGOs. These guidelines have incorporated harmonised reporting and improved tracking of funding streams, to encourage localisation and measure percentage of FCDO funds going to local and national actors, organisations led by women, and organisations led by people with disabilities.
- The UK has continued to support greater localisation of aid and improved accountability to affected populations. The UK continues to invest in initiatives to

support localisation in the humanitarian sphere, including the creation of the Start Network, Humanitarian Learning Academy, and the Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) Network, among others. We are supporting the Start Fund in the setting up five new country-based hubs over the next 3 years to support the expansion of national and local NGO membership, and a tiered due diligence model to reduce the barriers to accessing funding whilst building capabilities. Start Fund Bangladesh now has over 50% of its membership as local / national actors. FDCO has supported the piloting of Start Fund Nepal and is also designing a similar non-UN pooled funding mechanism for Northern Syria.

- FCDO country teams have adopted and implemented programmes that support Grand Bargain commitments and the UK Humanitarian Framework. A number have invested in programmes that have a strong focus on localisation. This includes setting up Civil Society Organisation (CSO)-managed pooled funds (Start Fund in Bangladesh, and [Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme \[HARP\] Facility](#) in Myanmar), prepositioning Non-Food Items (NFI) with national NGOs (NNGO) as part of disaster preparedness (Nepal NFI Programmes) and working with international NGOs (INGO) to build capacity of NNGOs (Afghanistan Twinning Programme) and working with Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) to increase funding to local & national actors (South Sudan), and expanding our civil society programme to provide grants to local organisations inside conflict-affected areas (Ethiopia)
- The FCDO has sought, where possible, to localise its Ukraine response, working closely with the Ukrainian government. We've funded a £10m Civil Society Fund to support Ukrainian civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations. As well as an NGO Consortium, which has a strong focus on localisation.
- The UK was the second largest contributor to the Country Based Pooled funds in 2022 and is the largest contributor overall since inception. The UK and has continued to push for greater utilisation of local and national capacities. Over the past few years, partnership between CBPFs with local and national partners has grown, with funding allocated directly or indirectly increasing from 24% in 2016 to 35% in 2022 (from \$174m to \$360m) The UK also provided extensive input into the new Global Guidelines for the CBPFs, which explicitly mention localisation as a key aim of the funds: *"while addressing humanitarian needs is the primary goal of CBPFs, localisation is recognised as a secondary aim. CBPFs have become a key vehicle for advancing localisation. CBPFs are aligned to the Grand Bargain commitment to making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary"*.
- The UK is also a leading member of the [Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies](#), a multilateral initiative established in 2013 to transform the way GBV and gender equality is addressed in humanitarian crises. The UK currently co-chairs a Task Team of the Call to Action working to address the barriers which prevent adequate funding for GBV and for local women-led organisations. Women-led organisations (WLO) play a critical role in humanitarian action and in preventing and responding to GBV. We need to ensure meaningful inclusion of WLO in the design, delivery and monitoring of humanitarian operations.
- We continue to directly fund local women's organisations responding to crises, including through the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund and our flagship What Works to Prevent Violence Programme which will ensure all innovation grants

are awarded to Southern-based women's rights organisations to drive locally led innovations and scale-up effective approaches, including in humanitarian settings.

UK advocacy and partnership on refugee issues

11. Have you observed any changes in the UK's influence on efforts to support refugees globally, as a result of the Government's stated position on reducing illegal migration to the UK?

All Governments understand the pressures and challenges that illegal migration brings to their societies. The UK's reputation as a leading donor, particularly in humanitarian and crisis situations, remains very strong. The vast majority of forcibly displaced people remain in their own country or stay as refugees in countries in the immediate region. The UK's prominent humanitarian support to the internally displaced and refugees, including in Jordan and Lebanon, in order to allow them to live in safety and dignity continues to give us the credibility to influence both at the international level and in specific crises.