

**Written evidence submitted by Sarah Champion MP,  
Chair of the International Development Committee (CSL 01)**

I am responding to your Committee's inquiry, launched following the appointment of the Rt Hon Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton to the role of Foreign Secretary. I am copying this letter to Mr Speaker (acknowledging his part in calling for this inquiry).

You have commented that the appointment of the new Foreign Secretary has raised many concerns and questions on how he will be answerable to the House of Commons. I will set out my views as both Chair of the International Development Committee and an elected Member of Parliament.

It is especially important that the opportunity to *directly* scrutinise the Foreign Secretary should not be diminished as a result of that Foreign Secretary being a member of the House of Lords. It is particularly crucial at this time when there is much uncertainty in the world. Engagement in foreign and development policy is extremely high across the membership of the House of Commons. The volume of Urgent Questions demonstrates this, showing how fast-moving global issues are and that we need the Foreign Secretary to rapidly respond.

The ability to hold the individual to account is uniquely important with respect to the role of the Foreign Secretary. The Foreign Secretary will have had direct dealings with their counterparts in other Governments and will have taken decisions based on their personal experiences in negotiations. There is a wealth of international experience in the House of Commons, plus our constituents tend to be very engaged in foreign affairs. For both these reasons, we need the opportunity to engage directly with the Foreign Secretary.

I have no strong view on which mechanism is used to enable the direct accountability of the Foreign Secretary, other than that it must allow for:

- (a) comprehensive opportunity for participation by members across the House of Commons; and
- (b) rapid, timely responses to emerging events

Complementary to scrutiny in the Chamber should be scrutiny by select committees. Engagement with the House of Commons as a whole and engagement with select committees should not be regarded as synonymous. These fora have unique mandates, functions and purposes.

In other correspondence, I have asked the Foreign Secretary to agree the frequency with which he will appear before my Committee. This should be in addition to the number of times that he appears before the Foreign Affairs Committee. The Foreign Secretary is in the relatively rare position of being directly accountable to two departmental select committees. I have not yet received a response to that correspondence.

I thank your Committee for taking up this inquiry. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to set out my position, as International Development Committee Chair and as an elected Member of Parliament, on this matter.

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