

## Written evidence submitted by HM Government

We welcome the Committees on Arms Export Controls' inquiry into HM Government's 2019 Strategic Export Controls Annual Report.

HM Government's approach to export controls is founded on transparency and accountability. Parliamentary scrutiny is a vital element in ensuring that our controls are rigorous, and that our strategic exports are responsible.

2016 saw the formation of the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU), as recommended by the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review. This created a cross-Whitehall centre of expertise in export licensing, bringing together teams from the Department for International Trade, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence.

The formation and co-location of the ECJU has resulted in more collaborative working, better knowledge transfer between staff and better communications between the responsible departments. This has helped deliver improvements to the wider export licensing process, such as the ability to react quickly to changing circumstances in a country.

In 2019, ECJU provided a wide range of training to help exporters better understand procedures and responsibilities. This included outreach to exporters across the UK, sharing expertise and troubleshooting problems at several regional workshops. 2019 also saw the launch of the Export Control Profession to promote excellence in compliance with export controls and trade sanctions.

In 2019 ECJU processed around 15,800 Standard Individual Export Licence applications, of which 77% were completed within 20 working days. The published target is to complete 70% in 20 working days.

Our performance overall against our published targets dropped during early 2020 but started to recover during the last quarter of 2020. This was due to several issues, including the availability of advisors due to COVID restrictions, as well as international events that have required careful and detailed consideration. This included Turkish operations in Syria and protests in Hong Kong.

In September 2020, the former Department for International Development merged with the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office to form the Department for Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The FCDO now provide advice on export licence applications covering the remit of both the former departments.

Robust export controls are vital to our national security, our prosperity, and the democratic and humanitarian values which the UK works hard to demonstrate and uphold around the world. We apply them rigorously on a case-by-case basis to all export licence applications.

We recognise and appreciate that arms exports are an important issue for many Parliamentarians and their constituents. We therefore look forward to cooperating closely with the Committees in this inquiry.

*The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade & President of the Board of Trade*

*The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
First Secretary of State & Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office*

*The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State for Defence*

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