

**International Development Select Committee**  
**Inquiry – Climate change, development and COP26**  
**Written Submission made on behalf of the Bond SDG Group**  
**May 2021**

**1. About the Bond SDG Group**

- 1.1. Bond is the UK network for over 400 UK organisations working in international development. The Bond SDG group has over 150 of these organisations as members and is advocating for the full implementation of the SDGs with a strong focus on their global impact. We focus on the implementation of the SDGs by the UK International Development Sector and the UK Government.
- 1.2. The current co-chairs of the SDG Group are Lilei Chow (Save the Children) and Andrew Griffiths (Sightsavers).

**2. Summary of recommendations:**

- 2.1. The overarching approach taken by the UK government must be focused on keeping warming to 1.5 degrees, integrated within a wider SDG implementation plan and a cross-government mechanism to deliver on the goals, both domestically as well as internationally.
- 2.2. There is an urgent need to scale up the availability and sources of climate finance, in particular additional investment allocated to adaptation, resilience and disaster risk reduction measures benefitting the most marginalised and deprived.
- 2.3. Policy coherence is critical for climate change as it is important not to decouple economic growth from environmental sustainability. It is crucial that climate change is mainstreamed through all development programming, ODA spend, and foreign investment. The recent merger of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office provides an opportunity for the UK to create better synergies among these priorities, to renew its commitment to pro-SDG public policy and to address policy incoherence which has hindered progress on the SDGs.
- 2.4. In order to understand how the SDGs are implemented in the UK, and what action each government department is taking on climate change, the full departmental Outcome Delivery Plans should be published annually, with clear metrics for success.
- 2.5. A comprehensive approach to tackling the climate crisis by the UK government requires a clear and coherent strategy on implementing the SDGs, both domestically and internationally, which will need to include not only how various government departments will deliver on the respective goals, but also how it will be financed, which stakeholders will be involved and how progress will be monitored.

- 3. We cannot solve our environmental challenges or climate change without investing in the health, safety and livelihoods of the world's poorest and most marginalised communities.** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an internationally agreed framework for people, planet, and prosperity, which recognises the interdependencies and complexity of sustainable development. The Agenda is built on the three pillars of social, economic and environmental development, and SDG 13 specifically addresses the climate crisis - this was developed to support the Paris Declaration, and to

align with the UNFCCC process. As a result, implementing the SDGs will ensure that the climate crisis is addressed in a way that leaves no one behind and addresses the imperatives of development, particularly for those furthest behind.

3.1. **Climate change is already impacting people** around the world, exacerbating poverty, driving forced migration and undermining development efforts. Failing to take action on climate change puts any prospect of ending poverty and achieving the SDGs far out of reach. According to the World Bank climate change could push more than 100 million people back into extreme poverty by 2030.

3.2. **It is important to underscore that the level and severity of climate impacts depends on the level of warming - it is critical to keep warming below 1.5 degrees.** We have already reached 1 degree above pre industrial levels and our current trajectory is for around 4 degrees warming by the end of the century - and even 2 degrees will have a devastating impact on the world, on migration and levels of poverty. Some examples of the difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees include:

- The risks from drought, floods, tropical cyclones, sea level rise, species loss and extinctions are all much higher than at 1.5 degrees
- An extra 10cm rise in sea level rise, which puts an additional 10 million people at risk compared to 1.5 degrees
- Even at 1.5 degrees the ranges of many marine species will shift and there is significant damage to marine ecosystems and coastal resources,
- Coral reefs, for example, are projected to decline by a further 70–90% at 1.5 degrees and be lost entirely at 2 degrees<sup>1</sup>. For example, 99.9% of coral will be lost at 2 degrees of warming – this is not just an issue of losing a beautiful natural phenomenon, it has major implications for people - for food, livelihoods and coastal protection and for migration:
  - Coral reefs are home to 25% of the world's marine species
  - They provide more than US \$375 billion annually in goods and services, with benefits extending to over five hundred million people
  - Without coral reefs 197 million people would lose their protection from major storm events.

4. **All ODA should be compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees and with the Paris Agreement.** In a year when the world is looking to the UK Government for leadership at the COP26 and G7 summits, it is deeply disappointing that it has chosen to cut the Overseas Development Aid (ODA) budget, when it is needed most, as the pandemic hits the poorest hardest. The United Nations has warned that poverty levels could reach as high as those seen 30 years ago as a result of the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Development funding to sectors including education, health and gender is essential not only to ending poverty but building resilience to climate impacts and future shocks.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC 2018: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty>

5. **The poorest people depend on natural resources most directly and are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation.** We all depend on the natural environment –for food, water, fresh air, fuel, fibre, medicines, building materials and commodities – natural resources are the lifeblood of our economy. However, the poorest people have less protection from the impacts of climate change, and they are often more reliant on natural systems which will be most impacted - for example those working in the informal agriculture or fishing sectors. The poorest people live on the front lines of climate change – with the least ability to respond and adapt, and often living in vulnerable places like hillsides, floodplains, dry savannahs or in urban areas in substandard housing that doesn't hold up in disasters, or living as refugees.
6. **The UK has committed to inclusion and equity as fundamental principles of its ODA through its Leave No One Behind promise,**<sup>3</sup> including prioritising the needs world's most vulnerable and disadvantaged people, the poorest of the poor and those most excluded and at risk of violence and discrimination.
7. **There is a deep injustice** that those who are least responsible for climate change suffer its gravest consequences. For example, **the climate crisis is an intergenerational crisis** that affects children now and in the future. Children, who today make up around one third of the world's population, have contributed the least to the climate and environmental crisis, but they are paying the highest price, particularly the most marginalised. It also fundamentally violates the UK government's obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.
8. **Climate change impacts are playing out first and foremost through changes to natural systems and natural resources** - floods, droughts, tidal surges, storms and changes to plant or animal species - with knock on impacts on livelihoods, migration, nutrition and health and other development outcomes. On the positive side – managing, protecting and restoring ecosystems – or **Nature Based Solutions can increase resilience to climate change**, providing options for mitigation and adaptation with co-benefits for people and nature.
9. **Ecosystems are already being impacted by climate change – some of them irreversibly** – and we don't know exactly how ecosystems will respond to climate warming past 2 degrees **tipping points** like the release of greenhouse gases from the ocean floor and from melting permafrost will accelerate climate change—emphasising the need to stay to 1.5 degrees.
10. **The SDGs are critical because** climate change is not just an environmental problem. Rather it is a **political economy problem, and a social justice challenge**. Climate change is the result of how our economies are structured and fuelled. And responding to climate change requires political and economic solutions. Climate change is also fundamentally a social justice issue. The SDGs provide an integrated, comprehensive political roadmap to address many of the root causes that are exacerbating the crises of climate change, on the one hand, and poverty and inequality on the other.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leaving-no-one-behind-our-promise/leaving-no-one-behind-our-promise>

11. SDG target 17.14, to 'enhance policy coherence for sustainable development', is recognised as essential to the delivery of the whole framework. **Prioritising or implementing the SDGs in isolation of one another can undermine progress in other areas of the framework.** Policy coherence is critical for climate change as it is important not to decouple economic growth from environmental sustainability - the SDGs provide a framework for coherent decision making on issues like trade, security and energy - all of which have a direct impact on climate change and sustainability, as well as economic and social development.
12. **Similarly, the SDGs will not be achievable without addressing climate change - climate change is a threat multiplier.** Climate change exacerbates poverty and inequality, and poses a threat to all our human rights, particularly for children, women and vulnerable groups.
13. In relation to **migration and the refugee crisis**, climate change exacerbates existing challenges and will drive new ones. This includes cross border migration as well as internal displacement. This is likely to increase as more places become uninhabitable due to flooding, sea level rise, desertification, water scarcity or failure of agricultural systems and fisheries. According to the World Bank report "Groundswell - Preparing for Internal Climate Migration", without urgent global and national climate action, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America could see more than **140 million people move within their countries' borders by 2050**<sup>4</sup>. But the authors argue that if we **act now, we could reduce the number** of people forced to move due to climate change by as much as 80%.<sup>5</sup>
14. Action on climate change needs to **be swift and far reaching** if we are to avoid the worst-case scenarios. This is not a future problem. It is happening now and we emphasise that the scale of the challenge depends on the level of warming, and so we must do everything possible to keep warming to 1.5 degrees.
15. **The overarching approach taken by the UK government must be focused on keeping warming to 1.5 degrees, integrated within a wider SDG implementation plan and a cross-government mechanism to deliver on the goals, both domestically as well as internationally.** This is critical because the SDGs cannot be achieved without urgent action on climate change, and the SDGs provide a framework for sustainable development that leaves no one behind.
16. **Under the UNFCCC process, industrialised countries including the UK committed to provide "new and additional" financial resources to countries in the Global South to address this "new and additional" challenge of climate change, which comes on top of and exacerbates development challenges.** New and additional" financial resources were understood to be new and additional to pre-existing commitments to provide 0.7% of GNI as aid. However, to date the UK's climate finance has come from the aid budget, with the justification that the aid budget has grown<sup>6</sup>. This is not a long-term or adequate

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2018/03/19/groundswell---preparing-for-internal-climate-migration>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/sdg13\\_progress\\_gaps\\_and\\_recommendations\\_for\\_the\\_uk\\_0](https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/sdg13_progress_gaps_and_recommendations_for_the_uk_0).

approach to meeting the UK's international climate finance commitments, particularly in light of recent cuts to aid. Therefore, there is an urgent need to scale up the availability and sources of climate finance, in particular additional investment allocated to adaptation, resilience and disaster risk reduction measures benefitting the most marginalised and deprived, for example through investments in adaptive and shock-responsive social protection systems around the world. Whilst specific climate finance is needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, it is also crucial that climate change is mainstreamed through all development programming, ODA spend, and foreign investment. The recent merger of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office provides an opportunity for the UK to create better synergies among these priorities, to renew its commitment to pro-SDG public policy and to address policy incoherence which has hindered progress on the SDGs.

17. **Almost 2 years since the UK presented its first Voluntary National Review<sup>7</sup> at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019, the UK government has yet to develop a comprehensive SDG implementation plan for the whole of government or establish a clear accountability structure to monitor and follow up on commitments and progress<sup>8</sup>**. It has, however, committed to publishing summaries of departmental Outcome Delivery Plans, which outline how each department will implement the SDGs, but will neither publish the guidance for these plans nor the plans in full - if we are to understand how the SDGs are implemented in the UK, and what action each government department is taking on climate change, the full plans should be published annually, with clear metrics for success.
18. Ultimately, **a comprehensive approach to tackling the climate crisis by the UK government requires a clear and coherent strategy on implementing the SDGs, both domestically and internationally**, which will need to include not only how various government departments will deliver on the respective goals, but also how it will be financed, which stakeholders will be involved and how progress will be monitored.

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<sup>7</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818212/UKVNR-web-accessible1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818212/UKVNR-web-accessible1.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/bond\\_sdgs\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/bond_sdgs_executive_summary.pdf)