

Written evidence submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (CLI0010)

Summary

- Climate change and environmental degradation are threats to global security and prosperity requiring urgent action and international cooperation.
- As the first major economy to legislate to end our contribution to global warming, the UK is leading by example as a global force for good.
- Action on climate change and the natural environment, centred around a successful COP26, and our G7 Presidency, will be a central part of UK global leadership post-EU exit and during the recovery from COVID-19.
- Action on climate change will support economic prosperity, security and enhance the UK's soft power.
- The FCO is committed to pushing forward the UK's climate and environmental objectives internationally –prioritising this work now and building its capacity to continue to deliver environmental diplomacy in the future.

What should the FCO's environmental diplomacy strategy look like?

1. The FCO's environmental diplomacy is integral to driving forward and delivering the UK's overall international climate change and environmental objectives. It covers a wide remit from ambitious reduction of global emissions to supporting countries as they adapt (particularly the poorest and most vulnerable); from protecting the ocean, forests and other critical ecosystems to reinforcing the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. Our near-term work will be focused around delivery of a successful COP26 and to ensure that we capitalise on its achievements and make environmental diplomacy a hallmark of UK international leadership.
2. In the run up to COP26, the FCO can play a central role in securing scaled-up action from countries, subnational actors, civil society and the private sector. We are encouraging all parties to come forward with enhanced emissions reductions. Early engagement is working. With Chile we are jointly leading the Climate Ambition Alliance through which 114 Parties to the Paris Agreement have committed to lowering emissions and 121 Parties have pledged to develop a "net zero by 2050" plan. We are working with country partners on transformative campaigns focused on: Adaptation and Resilience, Nature, Energy Transition, Zero Emissions Vehicles and Finance.
3. The FCO's diplomatic network works on all aspects of environmental diplomacy. Our Climate Change and Energy Attaches Network was the world's first diplomatic network dedicated to this agenda. We have circa 460 UK and locally-engaged officers (equivalent to 180 Full Time

Equivalents) working full or part-time on climate initiatives in the UK and overseas, and COP26 is a top priority for almost every Post and Head of Mission in the network.

4. The FCO's Prosperity Fund programmes work with large emerging economies that are key to global efforts to mitigate climate change, to promote inclusive and sustainable growth. This includes supporting them to increase their resilience to climate change, to reduce emissions, and to transition to a sustainable low carbon economy. The Prosperity Fund model of working in partnership with host governments to encourage policy and regulatory reform can have a catalytic effect in promoting inclusive economic development, clean and sustainable growth, and better business environments in key markets.

How effective is the FCO's current approach to environmental diplomacy? Does the UK use all available tools (sanctions, tariffs, trade negotiations, UN activity) to promote its objectives in this area. How does it ensure lasting and concrete achievements in this area?

5. The FCO supports HMG's environmental policy assisting and advising departments on international engagement and negotiation. For example:
 - We help align & deliver the HMG Prosperity Fund, and £5.8 billion International Climate Finance programme which the PM pledged to double to £11.6bn between 2021 and 2025, including maximising the synergies between poverty alleviation, environment & climate change work.
 - Supporting the Department of International Trade's approach to trade negotiations, including ensuring that economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand.

- We are proactive across numerous multilateral forums on environmental objectives, including at the UN and the multilateral development banks.
- Our diplomatic network and Department of Transport colleagues played a key role at the International Maritime Organisation in securing the first ever commitment to tackle emissions in the shipping sector.
- Building on the 2018 London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT), the UK has pressed for action to treat this trade as a serious and organised crime. As a direct result of the London Conference, Peru convened the first Americas IWT Conference in October 2019 where 20 countries signed the Lima Declaration committing to recognise IWT as a serious and organised crime and to strengthen cooperation. In September 2019, the FCO worked with Defra at the UN General Assembly to strengthen a Resolution on IWT.
- In 2019, we led delivery of an ambitious package of adaptation and resilience action at the UN Climate Action Summit, in partnership with Egypt, including a call for action, where 118 nations and over 80 organisations committed to raising their ambition.
- The FCO administers the Commonwealth Marine Economies (CME) Programme. Launched by the Prime Minister at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2016, the Programme supports 17 Commonwealth Small Island Developing States to develop sustainable and diverse marine economies that are climate resilient.

6. Regarding use of sanctions, the Sanctions and Anti Money Laundering Act 2018 provides the legal framework for the UK to impose, update and lift sanctions autonomously, however none of the sanctions regimes currently in force in the UK has “environmental diplomacy” as a stated purpose.

How does the FCO work with departments such as BEIS and Defra on this issue?

7. The Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister of State for the Pacific and Environment has ministerial responsibility for climate change, environment and biodiversity across the FCO, Defra and DFID.
8. The FCO works closely with BEIS, Defra, DFID and DIT across the environmental agenda including on climate change, protecting the natural environment and its biodiversity, tackling illegal wildlife trade and on trade policy.
9. The FCO and BEIS have a number of joint teams which directly address environmental and climate issues. For example, the Science and Innovation Network (SIN) focuses on clean growth and climate alongside other priorities, with over 100 dedicated science attaches across 50 countries. SIN creates partnerships to advance research, to develop technology and to encourage action from international partners to address global challenges such as climate change. The International Energy Unit (IEU) coordinates UK participation in multilateral energy fora, promoting a rapid, secure and affordable energy transition.
10. BEIS has a strong and growing presence in its priority countries, with climate-focussed staff embedded in Missions in Mexico, Colombia, China, Brazil, Malaysia, Peru and South Africa.

Working with FCO colleagues and structures, these staff facilitate the successful delivery of ICF programmes. They support an increase in ambition in partner countries through extensive engagement; and help build capacity in key institutions to support countries' ambitious climate commitments.

11. The network of in-country FCO staff also actively support the delivery of Defra policies and programmes. They provide support to co-ordinate and deliver UK negotiating priorities in advance of international fora and conferences. This has included work to secure an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework through the Convention on Biological Diversity; support to deliver Defra's Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT), biodiversity (Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus), and marine litter funding schemes. FCO has helped secure support for the UK-Vanuatu led Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance; promoted Defra-led policy on marine protected areas; and with Defra jointly hosted a UNFCCC COP25 Ocean Action Day event. FCO staff are also supporting Defra on the design and establishment of new ODA programmes such as the Blue Planet Fund and the joint Defra/DFID Biodiverse Landscapes Fund.

Does it have sufficient expertise in this area?

12. The Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for Climate Change Nick Bridge and the Climate Diplomacy Unit lead in supporting the Foreign Secretary & Ministers, and coordinating climate change work across the FCO, while a number of colleagues engage on other policy areas related to the environment, including biodiversity, Polar Regions and the ocean. Beyond this, the Climate and Energy Attaches network, Geographic and Thematic Departments, Strategy and Economic Units, Research Analysts and Ministerial Private

Offices are closely engaged in delivering climate and environmental goals, applying their respective expertise. FCO staff have diverse backgrounds, and many have qualifications in science or environmental subjects. Technical specialists are also embedded within a number of embassies.

13. All staff, as well as the specialist cadre are supported through access to courses, masterclasses, an online community forum and dedicated online learning overseen by the Diplomatic Academy. Reflecting the urgent need to ramp up our capabilities in the run in to COP26, an online course on climate change and energy has been launched in April 2020. A specialist six-month programme on Sustainable Finance is planned for 75 staff from summer 2020.

How do the UK's environmental and decarbonisation goals interact with other diplomatic priorities, such as the pursuit of new trade deals?

14. The Government is clear that more trade does not have to come at the expense of the environment. It wants to ensure that economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand. The Government will maintain the UK's world-leading standards of environmental protection and the UK's right to regulate in order to meet its domestic and multilateral environmental commitments. Nothing in any of our agreements will undermine the Government's commitment to tackling climate change.

Does the FCO effectively use environmental diplomacy to deal with the polar regions? How will Antarctica be governed after the Antarctic Treaty System expires in 2048?

15. The UK is fully committed to the Antarctic Treaty System, which preserves Antarctica for peace and science.

16. The UK secured agreement to the first Marine Protected Area (MPA) under the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in 2009, and promotes a network of MPAs around the Southern Ocean. The South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands fishery lead by example with one of the most sustainably managed in the world. We continue to press for a greater focus on the implications of climate change for the management of Antarctica, including through our initiative to secure protection for marine areas newly exposed by ice sheet loss or glacial retreat.

17. The Antarctic Treaty does not have an expiry date. Its Protocol on Environmental Protection, which prohibits commercial minerals exploitation, can be amended by majority, rather than consensus, in 2048. However, the minerals prohibition can only be changed, if there is already in place a binding legal regime covering mineral resource activities. Such a legal framework would require consensus among all Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

18. As a near neighbour to the Arctic, the UK is directly impacted by regional climatic and environmental change. Through our global climate and science diplomacy, our State Observer status to the Arctic Council, our bilateral engagement with the Arctic States, and the UK's extensive Arctic science expertise, the UK advocates to safeguard the Arctic environment, while respecting the sovereign rights of the Arctic States and the rights of the Arctic indigenous peoples.

How will the COVID-19 pandemic affect the UK's approach to environmental diplomacy?

19. The policy response to the pandemic must be consistent with and enhance COP26 and wider environmental objectives.

20. On 1 April, the COP Bureau of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), decided with the support of the UK and its Italian partners, to postpone COP26. We will be consulting inclusively and widely with all parties to the UNFCCC/our international partners to reach a consensus decision on date.

21. Ahead of the COP26 summit, efforts to rebuild the global economy will begin. We believe these should focus on supporting a clean, inclusive and resilient recovery building on the principles of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. This approach will benefit jobs and prosperity, as the UK example demonstrates. We will also work together to ensure the linked challenges of public health, climate change and biodiversity are addressed.

22. COVID-19 poses a substantial challenge for engagement, but we are working hard to overcome such barriers. It has reduced the scope for in-person international meetings, but we will engage intensively via video and phone conferences as the focus shifts back to COP26 delivery. Minister Sharma spoke recently at the Placencia Ambition Forum led by the Alliance of Small Island Developing States and supported by HMG funding. The UK, as incoming Presidency, co-hosted with Germany the eleventh annual Petersberg Climate

Dialogue. This year's Dialogue, which brought together ministers from 33 of the most influential countries within the UNFCCC, discussed the green economic stimulus and continued climate ambition in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

COP 26

What role should the FCO have in preparing and setting objectives for COP26? How well is it performing to date?

23. The Prime Minister-chaired Climate Action Strategy Committee agreed a clear cross-government plan for COP26 when it met on 4 March. The Foreign Secretary and FCO Ministers have played an integral role in these discussions shaping and agreeing the agenda.

24. To lead COP26 delivery, the Cabinet Office has established a COP26 Unit to coordinate efforts across government headed up by COP26 CEO, Peter Hill. Peter Hill, as well as COP26 Envoy John Murton and Chief Negotiator Archie Young are seconded from the FCO. The FCO has seconded five other staff to the COP26 Unit. We have also appointed four senior diplomats as dedicated COP26 Regional Ambassadors. Forty-four members of the FCO Protocol Directorate have been working on the operational side of the event, with the intention to raise this to 70.

25. In addition to this, to ensure a fully coordinated diplomatic effort (and to avoid duplication), members of the FCO's Climate Change Unit are embedded in the International Engagement Team of the COP26 Unit. The team provides a central point for the tasking and management of the FCO network around COP26.

What lessons can be learnt from the experience of previous COP hosts, particularly the French experience preparing for COP 21?

26. As the incoming presidency of COP26, the UK consulted widely to ensure an inclusive and ambitious COP. This has been done through our diplomatic network, but also through convening meetings of previous presidents. In February, the COP26 President hosted previous COP Presidents and senior officials (including COP21 President Laurent Fabius and Ambassador Laurence Tubiana). We have engaged intensively with French colleagues, and other Europeans, including through our partnership with Italy.
27. In Glasgow, the challenge is a need to accelerate progress towards meeting the goals agreed in Paris. We are working not only to conclude a successful negotiation, but to demonstrate tangible action to date, and deliver transformational shifts in aforementioned sectors. We will continue to listen to all parties in order to gain trust and support.
28. Based on the lessons learnt from previous COP Presidents, the UK has:
- Set up campaigns focused on key areas to address the practical challenges of global emissions reduction and adaptation and resilience.
 - Appointed a High Level Climate Action Champion, Nigel Topping, with deep expertise in climate issues as well as significant business and third sector experience, and strong networks in that community.
 - Empowered the FCO diplomatic network to help create the political conditions for a successful COP.
 - Taken an inclusive approach to ensure that both government and non-government stakeholders are consulted and, bought-in to the UK's approach, and willing to align their own actions and engagement.

- Built a broad ‘progressive coalition’ of like-minded states, including those countries most vulnerable to the changes brought by climate change.
- Appointed four FCO senior diplomats as COP26 Regional Ambassadors, in addition to the COP26 Envoy, Lead Negotiator & Foreign Secretary’s Special Representative, to ensure comprehensive engagement with all partners.

What does the FCO need to do to ensure that COP 26 is a success?

29. Making COP26 a success will require a whole-of-government approach, led by the COP26 Unit, working closely with key departments such as the FCO. Foreign Policy Priority Outcome 11 tasks the FCO to “tackle the global threat of climate change [galvanising] international action, promoting the role and impact of COP26, including bidding to host it, and taking a global leadership role”.

30. The FCO’s response to the Covid-19 crisis is evolving and the impacts at this time are uncertain, but COP26 remains a key priority for the FCO. All FCO engagements and policy meetings; with foreign governments, businesses and civil society; now include climate/COP elements wherever appropriate, and all Heads of Missions have aligned resources towards COP26 goals.

31. Through the diplomatic network, we will continue to engage countries on the key negotiations issues as well as encouraging them to come forward with new or enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Strategies (LTSSs). We are also working to bring countries together to make faster progress on the practical challenges of reducing emissions, building resilience to climate change, and aligning financial flows with these aims.

32. Before COVID-19 caused the cancellation of most international conferences in 2020, COP 26 was to have been immediately preceded by the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (BD COP 15), hosted by China. As climate change and biodiversity are intrinsically linked, we must continue to ensure the outcomes of both COPs are mutually-reinforcing.

Which countries should the FCO be prioritising for their diplomatic efforts in relation to COP 26? How should the FCO be engaging with these countries?

33. FCO, in partnership with the COP26 Unit and partners across government, needs to engage with all parties to the Paris Agreement to raise climate ambition, including with those who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and those who hold regional influence.

34. The COP26 International Engagement Strategy therefore covers all countries, while prioritising the 12 major emitters responsible for two thirds of global emissions. Engagement will be delivered at both an official and ministerial level through visits when possible, through our Heads of Mission, as well as calls and letters in the short term. Overlap with biodiversity objectives is also taken into account.

How should the UK seek to ensure that outcomes are delivered after the summit?

35. We are working to ensure that COP26 will deliver a package that upholds the Paris Agreement and accelerates global progress towards meeting its goals. This will include collaborative action in the following areas:

- **Adaptation and Resilience:** helping people, economies and the environment, prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- **Nature:** we will work with countries and communities to protect and restore natural habitats and ecosystems that are crucial to preserving both the planet's biodiversity and climate, including by ensuring follow-up on key goals agreed at the 2021 Biodiversity COP 15.
- **Energy transitions:** seizing the opportunities of cheaper renewable power and energy storage and helping countries move away from polluting fossil fuel power.
- **Zero Emissions Vehicles:** accelerating the transition to zero emissions road transport, contributing to cleaner air as well as a safer climate.
- **Finance:** Unleashing finance to power the shift to a zero-carbon economy and a climate resilient future, and align financial flows to the goals of the Paris Agreement

36. We will also focus on delivering negotiated outcomes after the summit, for example by working with the incoming Presidency of COP27. The UK is already supporting a wide range of countries to implement their climate commitments through our International Climate Finance. Last September the PM pledged to double our funding to £11.6bn between 2021 and 2025.

37. The UK will use its role in the G7 and G20 to influence member states and reinforce the outcomes of COP26. Our G7 presidency in 2021 will provide opportunity to demonstrate our leadership on climate issues and to steer the collective focus and agenda of the group, ensuring it aligns with COP26 priorities. The UK will continue to demonstrate climate leadership at home through our net zero legislation and ambitious carbon budgets, as well as through our Environment Bill, Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme, 25 Year Environment Plan, and our ICF commitments. In the G20 we will work with Italy, next year's president and our partners in COP26, to secure commitment from the G20 countries to implement the outcomes of COP26.

38. We will also continue to work closely with businesses and civil society, as well as through UN bodies and international organisations to ensure their work aligns with COP26 outcomes and helps embed environmental issues into the rules based international system.

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