

Written evidence submitted by Westminster Foundation for Democracy (INR0035)

WFD is the UK's democracy support agency. WFD was established in 1992 and has offices in 32 developing or transition countries and, in total, donor-funded programmes in about 40 countries. Our funding includes an annual grant-in-aid allocation from the FCO.

This evidence focuses on three elements of the Terms of Reference for this inquiry:

- The efficacy of the Integrated Review process
- The priorities for UK foreign-policy strategy
- The FCO's resource priorities

Integrated Review process

In addition to the assessment and prioritisation of UK interests, a successful Review will also determine how best to implement the resultant strategies. Delivery will be a first order challenge and is likely to need new groupings of UK organisations. In the area of democratic governance, we believe that the Review would benefit from convening a group of academic, thinktank and agency stakeholders that could support the government to develop new approaches. This should include organisations dealing with rule of law, press freedom, anti-corruption, human rights, political party support, elections and parliamentary strengthening.

Priorities for the strategy

The UK will need multiple strategies to pursue its security, defence, foreign policy and international development objectives. We believe that the overarching challenges of (i) the threats from increasing authoritarianism and (ii) the importance of resilience should inform the overall approach of the Review. This would ensure that the Review is able to set a direction that goes beyond the individual pillars. Democratic governance – accountability, transparency, rule of law, media freedom, effective institutions, democratic leadership – is a critical factor in responding to both these challenges and the Review should therefore develop a strategic approach to democracy support. The FCO is the natural home for leading on this given its global remit and the relevance of democracy to all UK international priorities.

FCO resource priorities

We see three resource issues that the FCO could address during the Review. First, there is a strong case for increasing the level of FCO programme resources from the overall UK ODA budget. This is because there are important UK international priorities that fall outside DFID focus countries and the scope of the joint funds. This should include research funding that would enable the FCO to establish a distinct set of applied research programmes to support

their decision-making. Second, such an increase should be linked to the use of strategic frameworks and long-term programming. This is common with DFID-managed programmes and rare with FCO-managed programmes. This needs multi-year budgets and a change of mindset to identify the key issues for UK interests and develop multi-year programmes to pursue them. This would complement the FCO's strong existing skills in crisis-management and political analysis. Third, the FCO and/or NSS should consider new grant and contracting arrangements that make it possible for medium-sized awards to be awarded to the not-for-profit sector. There is an appetite among relevant organisations to collaborate on democracy support activities but present contracting arrangements make this difficult.

May 2020