

## Written evidence submitted by the HALO Trust (INR0041)

The HALO Trust welcomes this inquiry and is pleased to provide evidence. The attached evidence focuses on the purpose and opportunities presented by the Integrated Review. It also considers issues of enhanced cross-government collaboration and approaches to harness the experience and capacity of British NGOs.

HALO's evidence makes recommendations that will support the government to achieve its stated – but as yet undelivered – commitment to taking a leading role in global COVID-19 response. We also highlight a critical gap in UK strategy relating to global weapons proliferation, an issue that is both a cause and consequence of conflict and insecurity. Our evidence includes recommendations to rectify this through the Integrated Review.

HALO's evidence draws on our expertise as a unique international NGO sitting at the confluence of security, development and humanitarian work. It also reflects our status as a key DFID partner, having delivered work with Her Majesty's Government in 15 countries over the past 32 years. HALO is committed to ensuring that the UK remains a global humanitarian and demining centre of excellence. We remain equally committed to supporting Global Britain as an influential force for good in the world, particularly against a backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and its inevitable impact on conflict, humanitarian crises and socio-economic development.

### Introduction

1.1. The HALO Trust (HALO) values the opportunity to contribute to the Foreign Affairs Committee's inquiry into the Integrated Review. HALO sees the Integrated Review as a critical opportunity to equip a Global Britain that is both influential and a force for good in the world. This paper outlines HALO's key policy recommendations at this stage of the review's amended timeline. Drawing on HALO's extensive programmatic and policy capability, it provides a summary assessment of key trends in violence and conflict. The paper also considers the current and future impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a multi-faceted global threat.

### 2. The HALO Trust

2.1. HALO's mission is to protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict. Founded in the UK in 1988, HALO is a world leader in humanitarian mine action (clearance of landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices, IEDs) as well as weapons control. It is the UK's eighth largest international NGO, with 8,500 staff in 25 countries and territories around the world.

2.2. HALO is committed to reducing human suffering caused by former conflict and armed violence, while working proactively to address the causes and consequences of instability, conflict and crisis that entrench poverty and inequality. HALO's work and approach places it at the nexus of global humanitarian, development and security concerns, making its expertise and experience relevant to the work of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the scope of this inquiry.

2.3. HALO is a key partner of Her Majesty's government through projects under the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), and the multi-year Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP) led by the Department for International Development (DFID). HALO has played a pivotal role in the administration and implementation of both GMAP for six years. Since 2018 alone, GMAP has funded HALO and other NGOs to clear 25 square miles of landmine contamination, the equivalent of 638 Wembley stadiums across 11 countries. It has helped 460 million people to live safely until landmine contamination can be cleared as well as supporting poverty reduction and providing employment in some of the world's most fragile locations.

2.4. As well as being a global leader in mine action, HALO has a solid track record of applying its expertise and capability to emergency response in the face of protracted and sudden onset emergencies. In 2004, HALO redirected landmine clearance capacity to humanitarian response when a tsunami decimated Sri Lanka's coastline communities. Now, HALO has proactively applied its knowledge, capacity and expertise to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic.

2.5. HALO is providing logistical support to front line medical efforts, providing ambulances and transporting vital supplies, improving water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and raising awareness about COVID-19 in rural communities. This reflects HALO's agility in pivoting its expertise, capacity and capabilities to respond to human suffering. As a proactive humanitarian organisation, HALO is preparing to support the response to the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihoods of those affected by conflict.

### 3. Key Recommendations

3.1. HALO offers the following key recommendations:

- i. **The primary purpose of the Integrated Review should be to equip a Global Britain with capability and influence to respond to complex global challenges over the next three to five years.**

It should draw on analysis of trends in conflict, as well as interconnected drivers and consequences of poverty and insecurity. Key among these are the increasing urbanisation of warfare, the asymmetric nature of current conflict combined with the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and global weapons proliferation.

- ii. **The Integrated Review should enhance the DFID-led Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP), building on the successful partnership with HALO and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG).**

GMAP has proven that it can yield tangible and measurable results, as well as providing high levels of employment in unstable locations such as Afghanistan and the Middle East. There is scope for greater scale of investment by the UK, as well as linkage between GMAP and broader defence, development and diplomatic lines of operation. Examples include Libya and Yemen, where HALO's programmes offer cutting edge solutions to urban clearance but are not properly nested in a broader UK strategy.

iii. **The Integrated Review is an opportunity to develop a new strategic and cross-government approach to global weapons control.**

Given that conflict is a primary driver of humanitarian suffering, it is noticeable that so little of the UK aid budget is spent on addressing its causes and consequences. A new Global Weapons Reduction Programme would complement a continued Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP). It could be funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA) in line with OECD criteria. A regional rather than national approach is vital given the increasing evidence of instability, migration and 'poverty traps' along national borders. Regional hotspots would include Central America and the Caribbean, the West Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Sahel & Maghreb, the Horn of Africa and Yemen, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

iv. **The Integrated Review should identify opportunities and mechanisms for greater coordination between military, diplomatic and non-governmental response to contemporary conflict and its consequences for human suffering and stability.**

This should include enhancing advance planning for complex humanitarian emergency response, as well as creating mechanisms for closer civil-military coordination on the ground.

v. **The Integrated Review should recommend greater alignment between the full range of British organisations capable of delivering results in support of Global Britain.**

In doing so, the UK government should ensure that it draws on core experience and competence and also consider how organisations' capability can be harnessed fully in the response to new and emerging global threats.

#### 4. **Trends in Conflict & Insecurity**

4.1. In recent years, conflict has been dominated by non-state actors operating outside of the rules-based international order, or by state actors using hybrid means, often of a non-state nature. The UK and its allies have often been slow to develop symmetric responses. As the UK's rivals have used hybrid means for malign intent, so the UK should develop its own hybrid responses, but for constructive purposes.

4.2. While acknowledging a broad range of developments since the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and 2015 Aid Strategy, HALO highlights the following key trends and opportunities as being of particular relevance. Addressing these through the Fusion Strategy will be critical to designing effective and integrated defence, security and development strategies to address current and future challenges.

i. **The COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate existing pressures caused by conflict, weapons proliferation and climate change, leading to increased poverty, fragility and humanitarian need.**

The pandemic will be simultaneously a protracted public health, economic and humanitarian

crisis. Its impacts will be felt in lower capacity states through famine, increased poverty and collapsed supply chains. The World Food Programme estimates that the number of people experiencing acute hunger will reach a quarter of a billion, with a likelihood of famines of 'biblical proportions'. Meanwhile between 14 and 22 million people could be driven into poverty, particularly in Africa and south Asia. This will increase tension over resources and increase migration in areas where insecurity and violence is already widespread. This underlines the importance of the review enabling closer integration of humanitarian assistance, economic development plans and stabilisation programming.

ii. **Modern war is now frequently waged in highly congested towns and cities.**

This has acute humanitarian consequences, including displacement of populations and extensive explosive ordnance contamination. Destruction of infrastructure and services has further longer-term impact on socio-economic development and stability. The review is an opportunity to ensure that the UK's response to the urbanisation of conflict is integrated in planning and response, including demining and IED disposal, stabilisation initiatives and humanitarian relief.

iii. **Cross-border and asymmetric characteristics, the involvement of non-state armed groups and the routine use of IEDs are now the norm in contemporary conflicts.**

Conflict takes place across multiple countries and territories, often in 'pockets' with no clear delineation of where active hostilities are ongoing or have ceased, or where safe humanitarian response is permissive. The use of IEDs – often constructed from basic components and deployed in both urban and rural areas – has led to a marked increase in civilian casualties. The review should recommend that the UK funds, and bolsters, its existing reputation and capacity as a global centre of excellence in responding to explosive ordnance resulting from complex contemporary conflict.

iv. **Growing insecurity is linked to a marked increase in violence, while cross-border proliferation of uncontrolled weapons and ammunition causes instability in entire regions.**

In 2019, 40% of all victims of armed violence were killed by firearms. In the five countries with the highest rates of lethal violence only two of them, Syria and Afghanistan, are in conflict, while the other three – El Salvador, Venezuela and Honduras – are not. The review should ensure that the UK's efforts to promote stability overseas address drivers of conflict and violence, notably growing levels of inequality, poverty, crime, climate change and resource scarcity.

## 5. **UK Leadership in COVID-19 Response**

5.1. The Foreign Secretary and Secretary for State for International Development have both committed to UK leadership in the global COVID-19 response. The UK has made substantial contributions to global appeals on COVID-19, totalling approximately £750 million. While the UK has become one of the leading donors to the global effort to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, the government has not, to date, delivered on its commitment to UK leadership. This is a missed opportunity that should be rectified urgently in both the moral and national interest.

5.2. DFID has, however, been slow to match vaccination support with funding and programming to global front-line response to COVID-19's primary and secondary impacts. A recent DFID Rapid Release Fund for humanitarian NGOs amounts to less than 3% of the UK's global funding to COVID-19. Out of 92 proposals submitted by NGOs, only seven were funded. This demonstrates clearly that there is underutilised and underfunded British capacity that could be drawn on to fulfil the government's commitments to global leadership. The inquiry should also recommend that the UK matches its support to vaccination development with funds to British expert NGOs on the front line. This is essential to prevent further waves of COVID-19, including in the UK.

5.3. The inquiry should also recommend that the UK complements its use of the ODA budget by filling a void in global leadership in COVID-19 response. The UK should draw on the capacity of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office to forge and lead country coalitions to address COVID-19 as an interconnected protracted global crisis. Coalitions should address the public health, socio-economic development and macro-economic economic impacts of COVID-19 and draw on the expertise and reach of NGOs. This would save countless lives, promote longer-term economic and socio-economic recovery and demonstrate the values and influence of a Global Britain.

## **6. Enhancing Fusion Strategy & Global Britain's Capability**

6.1. The UK's Fusion Strategy has contributed significantly to enhancing cross-government collaboration. However, government efforts to address the causes and consequences of conflict, armed violence and instability overseas still too often remain siloed. To achieve unified strategic effect, enhanced fusion of defence, development and diplomatic approach would allow economies of scale and the more flexible use of resources in support of Global Britain.

6.2. The need for fused strategies based on broad external stakeholder engagement will only be heightened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's commitment to leadership in the global response. A case study of Yemen is provided as Annex A below to demonstrate how an enhanced fusion approach to weapons removal would deliver humanitarian, diplomatic and stabilisation impact.

6.3. The UK has a unique range of humanitarian, military and commercial organisations capable of delivering results in support of Global Britain. A future-focussed Global Britain strategy needs to include mechanisms to harness the combined UK expertise held in government, the commercial sector and non-governmental organisations. The integrated review should identify capabilities needed to respond to new and emerging global threats as well as where skills and knowledge already exist within the full range of UK partners. Organisations and capability can then be invested in ruthlessly for Global Britain's maximum influence and impact.

## **7. Annex A: Benefits of an Enhanced Fusion Approaches in Yemen**

7.1. Years of conflict in Yemen have created the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Over 100,000 people have been killed and two million have been displaced. Over 24 million people – 80% of Yemen's population – require humanitarian assistance. The presence of COVID-19 now exacerbates a dire humanitarian, security and economic situation.

7.2. Yemen also has some of the highest explosive ordnance contamination in the world. The internationally recognised government has recorded over 3,000 deaths and injuries from landmines, IEDs and other explosive ordnance since 2015 in southern Yemen alone. Many civilians die before they reach the country's limited healthcare facilities and many more go unrecorded. Meanwhile, stockpiles of unstable, unsecured ammunition in urban areas pose a risk of further death and destruction through unintended explosion, while also providing a source of explosive for diversion into IED production.

7.3. HALO started mine and explosive ordnance clearance operations in early 2017 by partnering with the United Nations Development Programme to train and deploy members of the extant national capacity. The programme is however significantly inhibited by the absence of a campaign plan fusing military stabilisation, development, humanitarian, diplomatic and economic lines of operation. Operations are currently suspended as air casualty evacuation providers cannot guarantee timely access into Saudi-controlled Yemeni airspace. The simple act of reopening airspace through airfield activation, the provision of flights and COVID quarantine measures is one small example of what needs to be done. If operations restarted tomorrow, HALO could begin destruction of a stockpile in central Aden where 17 tonnes of military explosives have been identified.

7.4. But in the absence of a fused and integrated strategic plan, HALO can only provide a small and isolated service. A more coherent and integrated planning approach could provide tangible results and impact.

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