

Global Britain: Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As you will have seen, the Prime Minister has today announced that the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) will merge, to create a new overseas department from 1 September, led by the Foreign Secretary. The Government's Trade Commissioners will also move into the new department, reporting to Ambassadors and High Commissioners.

The Prime Minister set out the case for this change in his statement to the House earlier today and in his accompanying letter. Our security, prosperity, development and foreign policy are inextricably interlinked. The new department will ensure that Her Majesty's Government speaks with one voice overseas and will allow us to have a single, coherent country plan for each country. It will bring together the UK's world-leading diplomatic and development operations and we are clear that the new department will use all of its talent and resources to make Global Britain a reality, to maximise our international impact and to put the UK at the heart of the leadership of the international community.

Our multilateral partnerships expand the reach of UK development and mobilise tremendous resources and expertise to tackle global challenges. Our significant relationships with multilaterals help ensure Britain stands tall in the world.

Our bilateral programmes are world respected as they reach out to the millions of people who do not have access to the basics of life which we take for granted. The UK is committed to help deliver the Global Goals and implement our manifesto commitments on things like health, education, water and sanitation, and boost global efforts on family planning and nutrition.

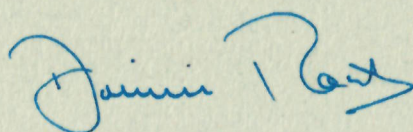
The new department will be renamed the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. It will have a new culture and approach and UK Aid will be at the centre of what we do. We will not be rolling back on our commitments to international development but pursuing them with greater effect. Our development and diplomatic efforts will be fused together more closely but we will ensure that the Government does not lose the expertise we have in DFID on development issues.

When DFID was created in 1997 it was the right set-up for that era. DFID officials have done fantastic work worldwide over the years, earning the department a very well justified reputation as the best in its field. But the world has been transformed since then. This requires us to make sensible changes to strengthen the influence that should come from possessing the third biggest development budget in the world, and from being the only G7 country to commit in legislation to spending 0.7% of GNI on international development. As we continue to commit to 0.7, we owe it to the British people to make best use of these assets.

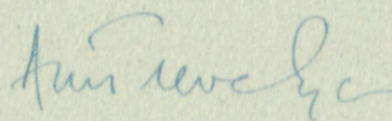
We recognise that this change will have an impact on the Select Committee structure in the House of Commons. The Government's view is that Select Committees in the House of Commons should generally mirror Government departments. We would therefore expect that the International Development Committee will not continue and the remit of the Foreign Affairs Committee will change to reflect the new department's roles and responsibilities. We know that both Committees have ongoing inquiries and we would expect there to be a transitional period to allow the work to be concluded or transferred in an orderly way.

While the new department will come into effect on 1 September, we expect work to prepare for the merger to begin sooner, ensuring the new department is fully functional from September. We appreciate that you and your fellow Committee members will likely have a number of questions about this change and the next steps. We would be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss this if you would find that helpful.

Yours sincerely,



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Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs and First
Secretary of State



Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan
Secretary of State for International
Development