

Written Evidence – Deborah Bronnert CMG (FWP0029)

Thank you for inviting me to appear before the International Relations Committee on 4 July. I enjoyed the opportunity to engage in a dialogue on Global Britain with your Committee as we look to shape our future foreign policy objectives in a rapidly changing global environment. I promised to write to the Committee in response to a number of questions that were outside of my direct remit.

The Committee asked about the current and future size of the UK representation to the EU in Brussels (UKRep). Due to the increased workload associated with the EU Exit negotiations UKRep now has over 150 staff. We are currently reviewing what we need for the future size, shape and structure of our mission to the EU. This work is ongoing, but we are clear that we will need a significant presence in Brussels once we exit the EU given the nature of the future relationship we are seeking, as set out in the Government's White Paper.

The Committee also asked about our contribution to the funding of the European External Action Services (EEAS) and the number of UK nationals in the EEAS. We do not have a precise funding breakdown as the EEAS is funded from the EU's overall Budget. The Budget includes a 'Heading' for maintaining central EU institutions, such as the EEAS. As a Member State, the UK contributes to the overall EU Budget, from which EEAS funding is drawn. As of 31 December 2017, the total number of UK national staff in the EEAS was 84, of which 39 were UK nationals employed directly by the EEAS and 45 were HMG officials on loan.

Finally, the Committee asked whether there are any plans to conduct a language audit across Whitehall. While we track language attainment levels for speaker slots in the FCO, we have no plans for an audit of existing language skills and, to the best of my knowledge, there are no plans to undertake an HMG wide audit. Language skills are an area where we have taken significant strides forward recently. The FCO Languages Strategy sets a target of reaching 80% of staff in speaker roles achieving the relevant target level attainment (TLA) by 2020. TLA is achieved if an officer has taken and passed the language exam for their role.

The Languages Strategy will be achieved through improved and innovative teaching, ensuring officers are able to complete their allocated training hours before being deployed, and by ensuring appointment boards take proper account of officers' languages capability when selecting officers for overseas speaker slots. The current TLA (May 2018) is 55%, up significantly from under 40% as recently as 2015. At Head of Mission level the current TLA is 71%.

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