

10 August 2020

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Jane Salmonson
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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Secretary of State

Dear Ms Salmonson,

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 July to the Prime Minister from civil society, academia, faith groups and businesses representatives about the merger of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to create the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). I am replying on behalf of the Prime Minister.

In his statement of 16 June, the Prime Minister announced that DFID and the FCO will merge, uniting development and diplomacy in one new department that brings together Britain's international effort. The FCDO will ensure UK development and foreign policy are aligned and that decisions on development spending are taken in a way that is consistent with a coherent and unified set of priorities for our international policy. By better aligning our development work with foreign policy and the broad UK national interest we will make it even more effective.

The work of UK Aid to reduce poverty and the expertise of the staff of both DFID and the FCO will remain central to the new Department's mission. Our commitment to spending 0.7 percent of our national income on aid is enshrined in law and we will continue to be guided by our responsibilities under the International Development Act, including the commitment to poverty reduction. We will continue to look at how this money can be spent most effectively in our national interest, including through the Integrated Review, which will inform the priorities of the new Department. All departments remain accountable to parliament and to taxpayers for how they invest public funds. We remain committed to full transparency in our aid spending and there will continue to be parliamentary and independent scrutiny of the aid budget.

We will do all we can to help countries grow and develop, to end aid dependency and help create Britain's trading partners for the future. This Government is proud of its record supporting fragile and conflict afflicted states and will continue to do so.

This Government also remains committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to the underpinning pledge to Leave No One Behind as we strive to achieve them. On our commitment to SDG 4.7, Education for Sustainable Development, all departments have responsibility for aspects of the SDGs and the FCDO will maximise its influence and expertise to ensure we are in the best position to confront the challenges that lie ahead – education will remain a top priority both for the new Department and the Prime Minister personally.

Advancing gender equality and women's rights are a core part of this Government's mission, and vital to fulfil every girl's right to 12 years of education. This Government remains steadfast in its commitment to this agenda. The Integrated Review is expected to conclude later in the year, which will define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world, including on gender equality and women's rights. The UK International Development Act (Gender Equality) 2014 also makes it a legal requirement that all UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) includes consideration of gender equality, ensuring that it remains at the heart of our work.

In line with the 2019 Green Finance Strategy, we are working to ensure that UK Official Development Assistance delivers climate benefits in support of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Since 2011, our international climate finance (ICF) has helped over 57 million people cope with the effects of climate change, provided 26 million people with improved access to clean energy and reduced or avoided over 16 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. In September 2019, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would double our ICF over the next five-year period.

It is the role of this Government to promote British influence around the world in being a force for good, in changing the world for the better, and to get best value for the British taxpayer who spends so generously to help others. This change will help us do that.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dominic Raab". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a stylized 'R'.

THE RT HON DOMINIC RAAB MP