

Dear Sister Price,

Your ref:

TO2020/22056 27 October 2020

Thank you for your correspondence of 19 September about the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

We are proud of our aid and the help it has provided to transform the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world. The merger is not about abandoning the world's poorest or children who desperately need our help.

The Prime Minister's decision to create the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office comes ahead of a critical time for the UK: next year the UK will be President of the G7, and will host the crucial COP26 climate summit. Alongside this, Covid-19 has demonstrated just how important it is that our development and diplomatic efforts are brought together more closely.

The pandemic has already disrupted the way we operate, and it is right that we use this moment of change to make long-term adjustments. The Sustainable Development Goals will play an important role in post-COVID-19 recovery, recognising the connection between healthy lives, healthy societies and a healthy environment. As the Prime Minister affirmed on 28 May, we owe it to future generations to build back better, basing our recovery on a fairer, greener and more resilient global economy, and to get our shared goals back on track, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Through the new FCDO we will ensure that the UK can continue to drive the international response to the pandemic – funding the development of a vaccine and supporting the global recovery.

Whilst many things will change there will remain a number of constants. Our commitment is to champion gender equality, girl's education and leaving no one behind because that is the only way we will create a fairer, safer and more prosperous world. We will also continue to pursue the UK's vision for an aid sector free from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. Not only are these the right things to do, they serve in our national interest and will be central to the new Department's mission.

We note your suggestion to ring-fence a portion of the aid budget for education. Reducing the number of girls around the world who miss out on school and raising children's learning standards are high on the agenda and will be critical issues for the UK's forthcoming Presidency of the G7 in 2021. We are keen that our focus should remain real-world changes in the lives of children. The UK does not ring fence aid allocations for particular sectors; we have found that it makes more sense to retain flexibility amongst them.

The UK has been a global leader on nutrition since 2013 and remains committed to tackling malnutrition, particularly as the indirect impacts of COVID-19 are set to increase malnutrition significantly in the poorest countries of the world. We are looking carefully at options for a new UK commitment post 2020.

We thank you for your continued support. Yours sincerely,

Correspondence and Parliamentary Questions Unit Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office