



Department
for International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

James Duddridge MP
Minister for Africa

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our ref

205012

Via email: lena.mccormick@parliament.uk

7 August 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 25 June, regarding concerns from a number of your constituents about the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to create the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

I am 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.

Merging the two departments will allow the UK to maximise our influence around the world and ensure we are in the best position to confront the challenges and make the most of opportunities that lie ahead. This decision comes ahead of a critical time for the UK: next year the UK will be President of the G7, and host both the crucial COP26 climate summit and the Secretary General's visit marking the UN's 75th anniversary. Alongside this, Covid-19 has demonstrated just how important it is that our development and diplomatic efforts are brought together more closely. It has also shown that a whole-of-government effort is as important abroad as it is at home.

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 a commitment to poverty reduction. This is right in itself, serves the national interest and will remain central to the new department's mission; as will being fully transparent and accountable to parliament and ultimately to taxpayers like yourself for how UK aid is spent.

The success of the UK-hosted global vaccine summit earlier this month is a prime example of what we as a country can achieve when we lead from the front. DFID leveraging its position as the largest donor to Gavi and working jointly with the FCO to deploy diplomatic machinery has seen the UK hosted Summit exceed the funding target raising US\$ 8.8 (£7.12bn) billion. These vital funds will vaccinate people against a range of preventable diseases and prepare for the global distribution of a safe, effective coronavirus vaccine once one is developed.

The UK's reputation as a world leader on development will be brought into the centre of the new department and taking forward the work of UK aid will remain central to the mission of the FCDO.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Duddridge". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

James Duddridge MP
Minister for Africa