



DEBATE PACK

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Estimates Day debate: Implications of the DFID/FCO merger for ODA spending

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Summary

On Thursday 9 July there will be an Estimates Day debate in the House of Commons Chamber on “The merger between DFID and the FCO and the implications for expenditure of Official Development Assistance (ODA) across government.” The debate will be led by Sarah Champion and Tom Tugendhat, the respective chairs of the International Development Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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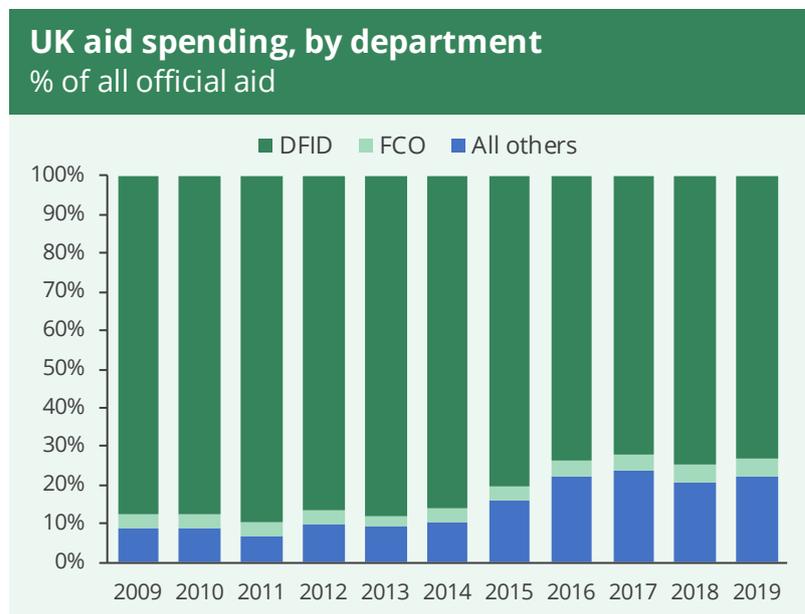
1. Background to DfID and the FCO

1.1 DfID and the aid budget

The Government has a legal obligation to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) each year on Official Development Assistance (ODA), generally referred to as 'overseas aid'. ODA is [defined by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD](#) – broadly, it refers to government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic welfare of developing countries.

The UK first reached the 0.7% target in 2013, and has continued to meet it exactly every year since then. As the economy has continued to grow during this period, the overall aid budget has therefore increased, even as Government spending on many other areas has been cut. In 2019, the total aid budget was £15.2 billion, around 1.7% of total public spending.¹

DfID takes the lead within government on international development in general, and specifically on reducing poverty. In order to do this, it spends a large majority of the overall aid budget, and has done so since its creation.



Source: DfID, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2018](#), 19 September 2019, and [Statistics on International Development: Provisional UK Aid Spend 2019](#), 7 April 2020

However, as the chart above shows, since the publication of [the UK's updated aid strategy](#) in 2015 other government departments have started to control a greater proportion of the aid budget. In 2019, DfID spent 73% of aid, with the FCO accounting for almost 4.5% and other

¹ DfID, [Statistics on International Development: Provisional UK Aid Spend 2019](#), 7 April 2020, and OBR, [Public finances databank](#), 27 May 2020

departments making up the remainder. As the International Development Committee reported in May 2018, this shift is because departments other than DfID were asked in the 2015 Spending Review “to consider whether any existing activities could be classed as ODA and whether they could increase the amount of their ODA expenditure”.²

Although all government departments are required to follow the OECD’s rules on aid spending,³ DfID’s focus on poverty reduction (see Section 2.3) means that its aid spending looks different to that of other departments. The table below shows how aid spending breaks down for the five departments responsible for the largest parts of the aid budget in 2018, excluding any aid that could not be identified with a particular sector.

Aid spending breakdowns, by department and sector					
% of department's total sector-identifiable aid, 2018					
	DfID	BEIS	FCO	CSSF	Home Office
<i>Total sector-identifiable aid, £ millions</i>	6,361.9	809.5	600.3	537.7	337.2
Administrative Costs of Donors	4%	2%	48%	9%	0%
Commodity and General Programme Assistance	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Economic Infrastructure and Services	16%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Education	9%	8%	10%	1%	0%
Government and Civil Society	9%	0%	17%	85%	8%
Health	17%	13%	0%	0%	0%
Humanitarian Aid	20%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Multisector/Cross-Cutting	9%	54%	25%	2%	0%
Other Social Infrastructure and Services	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Production Sectors	10%	12%	0%	0%	0%
Refugees in Donor Countries	0%	0%	0%	0%	90%
Water Supply and Sanitation	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note: CSSF = Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

Source: DfID, [Statistics on International Development](#), multiple editions

This shows that DfID’s aid spending is spread across a number of sectors, with a particular focus on humanitarian aid, health, and economic infrastructure and services. Aid from other departments tends to be focused much more heavily on a particular sector.

1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic

The decision to merge DfID and the FCO comes at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic is still having a serious effect on both the UK economy and on aid spending. As mentioned above, the Government is legally bound to spend at least 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on

² International Development Committee, [Definition and administration of ODA inquiry, paragraph 45](#), 2 May 2018

³ These rules are set by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, and are [detailed on the OECD’s website](#).

aid each year, which means that this spending target is linked to the size of the economy.⁴

Although GNI and GDP are not exactly the same, in the UK the figures tend to be very similar. Recent estimates and scenarios from the OECD, the OBR and the Bank of England suggest that the UK economy could shrink by about 11-14% this year,⁵ which suggests that GNI (and therefore the spending target) could decrease by a similar amount.

The Government is under no obligation to reduce its aid spending in the event of a decrease in GDP, but a recent media report suggests that this may well be happening – a BuzzFeed News reporter [has claimed to have seen a Treasury document](#) requesting that departments identify savings of 30% in their aid budgets. In [a recent PQ](#), the Government did not confirm whether this report was accurate, but did say that “the level of ODA spend is likely to decrease this year”.

If the aid budget were to be reduced in line with the shrinking economy (and if the forecasts/scenarios of an 11-14% reduction turn out to be accurate), we could expect total aid spending in 2020 to be around £13.0-13.5 billion, a reduction of around £1.7-2.1 billion compared to 2019.

The potential reduction in aid has not prevented the Government from committing funding from the aid budget to help to tackle the pandemic – as of 12 April 2020, £744 million had been allocated from the aid budget towards charities and research dealing with the impact of the pandemic and seeking to develop a vaccine.⁶

1.3 The Estimates

One of Parliament’s longest standing functions is the consideration and authorisation of the government’s spending plans, requiring the government to obtain parliamentary consent before spending public money.

Main Estimates are the documents that contain the detail of those spending plans for a particular year. There is a separate Estimate for each Government Department. Changes are presented at the end of each year through Supplementary Estimates. Each of the Estimates must be authorised by Parliament before they take effect.

The Main Estimates show the initial budgets which the government is seeking for each department, divided into separate limits for current, day-to-day spending (also known as Resource DEL) – on staff and other running costs, on goods and services and grants; and investment (also known as Capital DEL) spending – covering purchase and sale of assets, loans and capital grants. Costs are further divided into spending subject to fixed limits, based broadly on the plans outlined for 2020-21 in the

⁴ This legal obligation was created by the [International Development \(Official Development Assistance Target\) Act 2015](#), and applies to aid provided by all Government departments.

⁵ For more information, see the Library’s briefings on [Coronavirus: Effect on the economy and public finances](#) and [Coronavirus: Record GDP fall in April](#).

⁶ DfID, [UK leads global fight to prevent second wave of coronavirus](#), 12 April 2020

2019 Spending Round, known as Departmental Expenditure Limits; and less predictable and more demand led spending, known as Annually Managed Expenditure (AME).

The [2020-21 Main Estimates](#), were published on 4 May 2020.

Departments also produce an explanatory memorandum, which are [published](#) by the relevant House of Commons Select Committee and the House of Commons Scrutiny Unit.

Main Estimates: The Department for International Development

Overall department expenditure by the Department for International Development (DfID) is driven by the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA.

DfID plans a Resource DEL (day to-day spending) budget of £7,548.4 million in 2020-21. The main components of DfID's day-to-day spending are:

- Regional programmes: £3,106 million;
- Policy priorities, international organisations and humanitarian: £3,187 million;
- Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF): £66 million;
- Operating costs: £393 million;
- Other central programmes: £209 million, which includes the £200 million crisis reserve fund allocated as and when crises occur (in 2020-21 the majority of this funding is likely to be spent on COVID 19 international responses and will be reflected at the Supplementary Estimate);
- Scholarships: £28 million;
- Independent Commission for Aid Impact: £4 million;
- The Prosperity Fund: £97 million, including £38 million that is expected to be transferred to other government departments later in the financial year; and
- European Union Attributed Aid: £459 million. These are amounts attributed to DFID to reflect spending on development activities by the European Commission from its budget.

DFID plans a Capital DEL (investment budget) of £2,623.3 million in 2020-21. The main components of DfID's investment spending are:

- Policy priorities, international organisations and humanitarian: £2,337 million, which includes multilateral commitments;
- Regional Programmes: £275 million; and
- Prosperity Fund: £11 million.

In addition, in 2020-21 DfID plans an investment of £1,134 million in the CDC, a Development Finance Institution wholly owned by DfID. This is classified as Capital Annually Managed Expenditure (Capital AME)

Main Estimates: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) plans a Resource DEL (day-to-day spending) budget in 2020-21 of £2,755.8 million. The main components of FCO's day-to-day spending are:

- Administration, frontline diplomacy and overseas network – mainly costs of running the embassies: £1,073 million;
- Core FCO programme funds and grants to third parties (including international subscriptions e.g. OECD): £340 million;
- British Council: £176 million;
- Net funding for non-departmental public bodies: £7 million (increase of 1% from last year);
- Prosperity Fund: £156 million;
- Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (programme expenditure): £616 million; and
- Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (peacekeeping): £388 million.

The FCO plans a Capital DEL (investment) budget of £101.8 million for 2020-21. The main components of the FCO's day-to-day spending are:

- Frontline diplomacy: 98 million; and
- UK Science & Innovation: £4 million.

The FCO's capital investment programme is dependent on asset sales, notably the sale of the UK's Bangkok embassy. The proceeds of the Bangkok embassy sale will support the fit-outs of new embassies in Bangkok, Mexico City and a number of smaller posts, as well as continuing major refurbishments/reconfiguration programmes in Washington and Paris.

Main Estimates: Transfers between DFID and the FCO

The cross-government Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and Prosperity Fund are initially allocated to DfID, with the majority of the funding then transferred to other departments – mainly the FCO. DfID transferred a net £988 million of CSSF funding and £150 million of the Prosperity Fund to the FCO in the 2020-21 Main Estimate.

In 2020-21 there were also the following inter-departmental transfers between DfID and the FCO at the Main Estimate:

- £333 million of Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding from DfID to the FCO to support the UK's existing foreign policy objectives and commitments;
- £35 million from the FCO to DfID for the One HMG platform;
- £18 million from DfID to the FCO for the Africa Strategy;
- £10 million funding from DfID to the FCO for Hurricane Irma reconstruction; and
- £3 million from DfID to the FCO for the Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights.

In total there were planned net transfers from DfID to the FCO of £1,467 million at the 2020-21 Main Estimate.

2. The FCO-DfID merger

2.1 A history of mergers and splits

There is [a history](#) of these departments being merged and subsequently split.

A separate Ministry of Overseas Development was [set up in 1964](#) by the incoming Labour government, headed by a Minister of Overseas Development. It brought together the functions of the former Department of Technical Co-operation and the overseas aid policy functions of the Foreign, Commonwealth Relations and Colonial Offices and of other government departments.

That ministry was dissolved in 1970 by the new Conservative government and the functions of the Minister of Overseas Development were transferred to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Overseas development work was then carried out by the Overseas Development Administration, which was a functional wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The Overseas Development Administration operated briefly as a separate ministry after 1974, but then became a functional wing of the FCO again in 1979.

The current Department for International Development (DfID) was established in 1997 by the incoming Labour Government. Headed by a Cabinet Minister, DfID replaced the Overseas Development Administration which had operated within the FCO since 1979.

On 16 June 2020 the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced that the FCO and DfID are to merge. The new department will be called the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, will have ultimate responsibility for decisions about aid spending.

2.2 Policy background

On 16 June, the Prime Minister [told Parliament](#) that combining DfID with the FCO would create a "[super-department](#)", uniting "our aid with our diplomacy" in a way that is consistent with the Government's vision for a "[Global Britain](#)".

He said the "long overdue reform" would ensure "maximum value" for taxpayers.

The Prime Minister indicated that the merger would happen in September. This is very likely to be before the completion of the ongoing integrated foreign policy, defence, development and security review, which has been paused due to the coronavirus pandemic. This review is designed to "[reassess the ways in which we engage on the global stage, including in defence, diplomacy and our approach to development, to ensure that we have a fully integrated strategy.](#)"

2.3 Implications of the merger

Reprioritisation of aid spending

The Prime Minister indicated that there is likely to be a [reprioritisation of aid spending](#):

We give as much aid to Zambia as we do to Ukraine, though the latter is vital for European security and we give ten times as much aid to Tanzania as we do to the six countries of the western Balkans, who are acutely vulnerable to Russian meddling.

He said the UK must use its “aid budget and expertise to safeguard British interests and values overseas.”

Aid effectiveness

The Prime Minister said that he wanted to [increase coherence](#) between the two departments in “foreign capitals”, and this decision would make the UK’s international presence “more than the sum of its parts.” He said the UK was one of the few donor countries which had a separate government department for aid.

The focus of the FCO’s spending is generally different to that of DfID. As indicated in the table in section 1.1, in 2018 the top three aid sectors that DfID spent money on were humanitarian aid, health, and economic infrastructure and services. This made up just over half of all the spending that could be identified with a particular sector.

The FCO, on the other hand, spent almost half of its aid allocation on administrative costs, with the next highest sectors being multisector or cross-cutting projects and government and civil society.

This reflects the fact that the FCO spends much of its aid allocation on “frontline diplomatic activity” – costs associated with diplomatic administration connected to development.

In September 2018, the International Development Committee (IDC) inquiry into the [definition and administration of official aid](#) reported the Committee was concerned that the use of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for administrative purposes is “misdirected” and in some cases “existing diplomatic activities are being badged as ODA without any additional targeting to lead to a reduction in poverty.”

These concerns reflect wider criticisms that ODA-spending government departments other than DfID are [less transparent](#) in their reporting of that spending. The 2020 Aid Transparency Index, published by an NGO called Publish What You Fund, gave the FCO a [lower rating](#) (“fair” – but up from “poor” in the 2018 Index) than DfID (“very good”).

In recent years, DfID has been tasked with assisting other government departments in improving their transparency. There are now [fears](#) that the end of DfID could lead to lower reporting standards in future.

Annaliza Prizzon of the Overseas Development Institute, a UK-based think-tank, has [argued](#) that “[empirical evidence](#)” suggests that the “leadership of a dedicated minister for international cooperation at cabinet level matters for development effectiveness.”

The [impact of recent mergers](#) of foreign ministries and aid cooperation ministries in Canada (2013), Australia (2013) and Norway (2014) was discussed in some depth in an article published on the *Devex* website in December 2019.

The International Development Act

The poverty-reduction priority of the 2002 *International Development Act* is a legal obligation for DfID. But other government departments are not bound by this requirement. The legislation may require amendment as a result of the merger. There were recent [press reports](#) suggesting that this could happen, and in a PQ answered on 1 July 2020, the Government [said that it would](#) “undertake the necessary parliamentary process to transfer responsibilities under the International Development Act to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office”.

The Prime Minister said the merger represented an [opportunity](#) to put “the tackling of poverty and deprivation at the very heart [...] of UK foreign policy”, insisting that it was “not a return to the idea of tied aid”. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has also said that the proportion of aid money going to the [world’s poorest and conflict-affected countries](#) will not be reduced after the merger.

The government has also indicated that it will [continue to adhere](#) to the OECD’s aid rules after the merger.

Changes to the Estimates

For detailed background on the Estimates, please see section 1.3 above.

As a result of the merger, DfID will cease to exist as an entity with its own Accounting Officer, and will therefore no longer produce its own Estimate.

HM Treasury has [published guidance on Supply Estimates](#), which sets out the Estimates requirements for new departments:

A New Estimate is required where a new department is established after the Main Estimates for the year have been presented to Parliament. This might occur where a department is split into two as part of a machinery of government change during the financial year. In this particular circumstance one department might take on the old Estimate and revise it as part of the next Supplementary round, whilst the second department submits a New Estimate within the Supplementary Estimates booklet. The New Estimate will take the form of a Main Estimate and will provide prior year comparative data for any functions that have been transferred from another department.

It is therefore possible that in the next Supplementary Estimate (likely to be released in early 2021), DFID’s spending will be assumed within the existing Estimates of the FCO under the updated name of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Historical comparator figures would be published for the functions transferred from DfID to the FCO. Alternatively, a completely new Estimate may be created for the new Department.

2.4 Reaction to the merger

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said the merger would “[diminish Britain’s place in the world](#).” He also raised concerns over the timing of the announcement, saying it was designed to divert attention away from the current economic downturn and the high death toll from Covid-19.

Jeremy Hunt, the former Foreign Secretary, told the Commons that the merger was the right thing to do. He stressed the need for the UK to “[speak with one voice](#).”

Former Foreign Office Minister, Tobias Ellwood, said the integrated review [should have come first](#).

The current Chair of the International Development Committee (IDC), Sarah Champion MP [criticised the decision](#). The Committee recently published [a report](#) recommending that the two departments remain separate, warning that the closer alignment of aid with foreign policy goals and the national interest risks damaging the UK’s “soft power.”

Three former Prime Ministers also [criticised the decision](#), with David Cameron saying it will diminish the UK’s international standing.

Many UK-based charities working in the development sector expressed dismay about the decision, calling it “[political vandalism](#).” The non-governmental organisation, [ONE](#), said:

“[it] is a loss for global Britain and the world’s poorest people [...] It’s perplexing that the government chose the middle of a global pandemic to merge these two departments”.

A minority of charities have been more positive. James Cowan, head of the HALO Trust, a demining charity, said that the merger was “[the right thing to do](#)”, adding that “by failing to work together, it’s our beneficiaries who suffer.”

Secretary of State for International Development Anne-Marie Trevelyan published an article [defending the merger](#) in the *Guardian* on 27 June.

3. Parliamentary material

3.1 PQs

[Department for International Development: Reorganisation](#)

30 Jun 2020 | HL6067

Asked by: Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the case for merging the Department for International Development into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Answering member: Baroness Sugg | Department for International Development

The Government remains fully focused on stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives. We are using UK aid to its full effect to counter the health, humanitarian, and economic risks and impact of this pandemic in the developing world. Through aligning our efforts, we will maximise our influence and expertise and ensure we are in the best position to continue to drive the international response to the pandemic – funding the development of a vaccine and supporting the global recovery.

[Overseas Aid: Family Planning](#)

30 Jun 2020 | WHL6036

Asked by: Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Prime Minister on 16 June about the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (HC Deb, cols 666–8), what plans they have to ensure that family planning is a priority in the use of Overseas Development Assistance.

Answering member: Baroness Sugg | Department for International Development

The UK government's commitment to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights overseas is unwavering: from tackling HIV, to family planning, safe abortion, maternal and newborn health, and supporting efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. Through our voice on the world stage and in our UK aid programmes, we continue to put women and girls and the poorest and most marginalised at the heart of what we do.

[Department for International Trade: Independent Commission for Aid Impact](#)

30 Jun 2020 | HL5890

Asked by: Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development will merge, what will be the effect on the Independent Commission for Aid Impact.

Answering member: Baroness Sugg | Department for International Development

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be accountable to parliament for how it spends UK aid. We remain committed to full transparency in our aid spending and there will continue to be parliamentary and independent scrutiny of the aid budget – the form this takes following the merger will be set out in due course.

Department for International Development: Reorganisation
29 Jun 2020 | 64277

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 24 June 2020 to Question 61560, on what day was she given formal notice of the merger of her Department with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Department for International Development

I am in regular contact with the Prime Minister and other ministers about how the UK allocates and spends ODA. Decisions on Machinery of Government changes are made by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister discussed the merger with both the Foreign Secretary and me ahead of his announcement in the House.

Department for International Development: Foreign and Commonwealth Office
29 Jun 2020 | 64205

Asked by: Sarah Champion

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how the staff of the Department for International Development were notified of (a) the merger between that department and his Department and the (b) implications for their jobs of that merger.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Department for International Development

It is an important principle that announcement of a change such as this should be made by the PM in Parliament first. Staff were informed straight after the announcement. We will work closely with staff throughout the process of implementing the merger. Merging the departments will bring together the best of what we do in aid and diplomacy, and create new opportunities for staff. The ambition, vision and expertise of DFID staff will be at the heart of the new department – taking forward the work of UK aid, which will remain central to our mission. There will be no compulsory redundancies.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

29 Jun 2020 | 63357

Asked by: Stephen Doughty

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what arrangements have been made to amend the (a) shareholding in, (b) ministerial oversight of and (c) parliamentary scrutiny of the Commonwealth Development Corporation since the Prime Minister's announcement on 16 June 2020; when those arrangements will come into force; and whether legislative change will be required.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Department for International Development

The PM has launched a government-wide review of the UK's foreign, defence, security and development policy. As the UK's Development Finance institution, wholly owned by the Crown, CDC will be part and parcel of this integrated review. The Crown's shareholding in CDC is not expected to change. Ministerial oversight of CDC will continue to be exercised by the Secretary of State for International Development until September, at which time Ministerial oversight of CDC will pass to the Foreign Secretary as the Secretary of State responsible for the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. There will continue to be parliamentary scrutiny of CDC. It is not anticipated that the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will require any legislative changes in relation to CDC.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Overseas Aid

25 Jun 2020 | House of Commons | 59556

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department is signing new funding agreements for projects funded by Official Development Assistance.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK has a legal commitment to spend 0.7% of its Gross National Income (GNI) each year on Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since this commitment is linked to the size of the economy, the level of ODA spend will increase or decrease in line with GNI. The Government reviews the ODA funding it allocates to projects on a regular basis in order to ensure delivery of its commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA.

Independent Commission for Aid Impact

24 Jun 2020 | 61559

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what the Government's plans are for the Independent Commission for Aid Impact after the merger of her Department with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Department for International Development

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be accountable to parliament for how it spends UK aid. We remain committed to full transparency in our aid spending and there will continue to be parliamentary and independent scrutiny of the aid budget – the form this takes following the merger will be set out in due course.

**[Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Overseas Aid](#)
22 Jun 2020 | 59817**

Asked by: Patrick Grady

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the costs of rebranding and renaming the proposed Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will count towards the spending target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for Official Development Assistance.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We will make the change in the most cost-effective way possible and set out full details in due course. Spending 0.7 percent of our national income on aid is enshrined in law and the UK continues to abide by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee rules for aid. We anticipate that in the long term the merger may bring efficiency savings to the cost of administering the aid budget, but that's not the primary goal of the merger, which is about uniting our international efforts so we can maximise the UK's influence around the world.

3.2 Debates

**[Official Development Assistance Target](#)
13 Jan 2020 | Adjournment debates | 669 cc855-864**

3.3 Statements

**[Global Britain](#)
16 Jun 2020 | House of Commons chamber | 677 cc665-388**

3.4 EDMs

[Merger of the Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

EDM 615 (session 2019-21)

Wendy Chamberlain

16 June 2020

That this House strongly condemns the merger of the Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Global Goals, Official Development Assistance, and the role of the Department for International Development

EDM 21 (session 2019-21)

Patrick Grady

19 December 2019

That this House affirms its commitment to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development agreed by Member States of the United Nations in 2015 with the aim of ending poverty, fighting inequality and addressing the urgency of climate change by 2030; believes the United Kingdom's statutory commitment to spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income each year as Official Development Assistance demonstrates cross-party consensus in the UK behind the importance of those goals, and ambitious leadership among the international community of donor countries; further believes that the existence since 1997 of a dedicated Government Department and Secretary of State for International Development has protected and enhanced the work of Government and thousands of agencies and charities funded by Government, in meeting global targets to end poverty; and believes that the Department for International Development should continue to exist as a dedicated Government Department throughout the lifetime of this Parliament and beyond.

4. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

[**DfID merger: experts warn of brain drain and damage to UK's global standing**](#)

The Guardian
Karen McVeigh
25 June 2020

[**DFID merger causes 'serious transparency challenge' for UK aid**](#)

Devex
William Worley
24 June 2020

[**There is a way to make UK aid more effective — this merger is not it**](#)

Financial Times
Rory Stewart
19 June 2020

[**Why the DFID-FCO Merger Will Make Aid's Most Transformative Work Impossible and the Battles Ahead**](#)

Global Policy
Tom Kirk
19 June 2020

[**DfID reform was long overdue**](#)

Daily Telegraph
17 June 2020

[**The UK can lead the world in the fight to end poverty. But does this government still care?**](#)

The House Magazine
Sarah Champion MP
17 June 2020

[**Farewell Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Welcome Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**](#)

RUSI
Malcolm Chalmers
16 June 2020

[**Good riddance to the Department for Blank Cheques**](#)

Daily Telegraph
Con Coughlin
16 June 2020

International development and Foreign Office to merge

BBC News
16 June 2020

What's behind the PM's aid department decision?

BBC News
James Landale
16 June 2020

**Foreign Office and International Development merger will curb
'giant cashpoint' of UK aid, PM pledges**

Deborah Haynes
Sky News
16 June 2020

What happens when an aid department is folded?

Devex
Abby Young-Powell
18 December 2019

5. Press Releases

[Prime Minister announces merger of Department for International Development and Foreign Office](#)

Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing St

17 June 2020

The Prime Minister has announced that DFID and the FCO will merge, uniting development and diplomacy in one new department that brings together Britain's international effort.

Work will begin immediately on the merger. The new department – the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – will be established in early September and will be led by the Foreign Secretary.

The merger is an opportunity for the UK to have even greater impact and influence on the world stage as we recover from the coronavirus pandemic and prepare to hold the G7 presidency and host COP26 next year.

UK aid will be given new prominence within our ambitious international policy. The Foreign Secretary will be empowered to make decisions on aid spending in line with the UK's priorities overseas, harnessing the skills, expertise and evidence that have earned our reputation as a leader in the international development community.

The UK is the only G7 country to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas development and the Government remains committed to this target, which is enshrined in law.

Announcing the new department, the Prime Minister said:

This is exactly the moment when we must mobilise every one of our national assets, including our aid budget and expertise, to safeguard British interests and values overseas.

And the best possible instrument for doing that will be a new department charged with using all the tools of British influence to seize the opportunities ahead.

The Prime Minister has also announced that the UK's Trade Commissioners will come under the authority of UK Ambassadors overseas, bringing more coherence to our international presence.

The objectives of the new overseas department will be shaped by the outcome of the Integrated Review, which is expected to conclude in the autumn, and is the biggest review of foreign, defence and development policy since the Cold War.

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