



Department
for International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Wendy Morton MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

Mike Podmore
Director
STOPAIDS

Our ref: 205212

By email to: info@stopaids.org.uk

21 August 2020

Dear Mr Podmore

Thank you for your recent correspondence to the Prime Minister 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 as the Minister responsible for global health policy at DFID and the FCO. I was pleased to receive your helpful suggestions on the organisational plans for the new department which are currently being shaped. The full details of the merger, including the structure of the new department, will be set out in due course.

The UK Government commitment to advancing and defending comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights 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.

As the Prime Minister has said, the creation of the FCDO is about ensuring our development and foreign policy objectives are aligned and that decisions on development spending take into account a coherent and unified set of priorities for our international policy. The work of UK Aid to reduce poverty 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 a commitment to poverty reduction.

Merging DFID and the FCO will allow the UK to bring together its international effort and expertise to maximise our influence around the world and ensure we are in the best position to confront the challenges and make the most of the 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 UN's 75th anniversary celebrations. The success of the recent Global Vaccine Summit shows the potential when diplomacy and development aligns. Representatives from 62 countries, including 42 Heads of State and Government, joined together with leaders from global health organisations, the private sector and civil society organisations to support the Vaccine Alliance's work to protect almost half the world's children against deadly, preventable

infectious diseases. The summit was a historic success, raising \$8.8 billion – significantly ahead of the target – with commitments to provide equal access to vaccines for all.

Furthermore, I would like to assure you that the UK government will continue to be a world leader in the HIV response, through our considerable investment in the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, as well as through support to the Robert Carr Fund to advocate for the rights and needs of the most marginalised groups, such as LGBTQ+ people and sex workers. The UK Government will continue to support countries, in partnership with international organisations and NGOs, to strengthen their health systems to achieve universal health coverage, improve health security, and tackle the diseases and health conditions, such as HIV, that disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable. This, together with our commitment to sexual reproductive health and rights is key to ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable are protected from future crises, leaving no-one behind and ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn babies and children by 2030.

The Government will continue its ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, such as yourselves at STOPAIDS and the Action for Global Health, about the creation of the FCDO. We recognise these changes affect our partners and are committed to ensuring regular and timely engagement.

Thank you for writing on this important matter, and for your commitment to improving the response to HIV and global health throughout this time.

Yours sincerely
Wendy Morton

Wendy Morton MP
Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas